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THE

CREED OF CHRISTENDOM;

ITS

FOUNDATIONS AND SUPERSTRUCTURE.

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THE

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BY

WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG.

"THE PRAYER OF AJAX WAS FOR LIGHT."

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BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·

"I should, perhaps, be a happier, at all events a more useful, man, if my mind were otherwise constituted. But so it is: and even with regard to Christianity itself, like certain plants, I creep towards the light, even though it draw me away from the more nourishing warmth. Yea, I should do so, even if the light made its way through a rent in the wall of the Temple."—COLERIDGE.

"Perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out;
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them: thus he came at length

"To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

"But in the darkness and the cloud."

TENNYSON.

"No inquirer can fix a direct and clear-sighted gaze towards Truth, who is casting side glances all the while on the prospects of his soul."—MARTINEAU.

"What hope of answer or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil."

TENNYSON.

PREFACE.

THIS work was commenced in the year 1845, and was finished two years ago. Thus much it is necessary to state, that I may not be supposed to have borrowed without acknowledgment from works which have preceded mine in order of publication.

It is now given to the world after long hesitation, with much diffidence, and with some misgiving. For some time I was in doubt as to the propriety of publishing a work which, if it might correct and elevate the views of some, might also unsettle and destroy the faith of many. But three considerations have finally decided me.

First. I reflected that, if I were right in believing that I had discerned some fragments or gleams of truth which had been missed by others, I should be acting a criminal and selfish part if I allowed personal considerations to withhold me from promulgating them;—that I was not entitled to take upon myself the privilege of judging what amount of new light the world could bear, nor what would be the effect of that light upon individual minds;—that sound views are formed and established by the contribution, generation after generation, of widows' mites;—that if my small quota were of any value it would spread and fructify, and if worthless, would come to naught.

Secondly. Much observation of the conversation and controversy of the religious world had wrought the conviction that the evil resulting from the received notions as to Scriptural authority has been immensely under-estimated. I was compelled to see that there is scarcely a low and dishonour-

ing conception of God current among men, scarcely a narrow and malignant passion of the human heart, scarcely a moral obliquity, scarcely a political error or misdeed, which Biblical texts are not, and may not be without any violence to their obvious signification, adduced to countenance and justify. On the other hand I was compelled to see how many clear, honest, and aspiring minds have been hampered and baffled in their struggles after truth and light, how many tender, pure, and loving hearts have been hardened, perverted, and forced to a denial of their nobler nature and their better instincts, by the ruthless influence of some passages of Scripture which seemed in the clearest language to condemn the good and to denounce the true. No work contributed more than Mr. Newman's Phases of Faith, to force upon me the conviction that little progress can be hoped either for religious science or charitable feeling till the question of Biblical authority shall have been placed upon a sounder footing, and viewed in a very different light.

Thirdly. I called to mind the probability that there were many other minds like my own pursuing the same inquiries, and groping towards the same light; and that to all such the knowledge that they have fellow-labourers where they least expected it, must be a cheering and sustaining influence.

It was also clear to me that this work must be performed by laymen. Clergymen of all denominations are, from the very nature of their position, incapacitated from pursuing this subject with a perfect freedom from all ulterior considerations. They are restrained and shackled at once by their previous confession of Faith, and by the consequences to them of possible conclusions. It remained, therefore, to see what could be done by an unfettered layman, endowed with no learning, but bringing to the investigation the ordinary education of an English gentleman, and a logical faculty exercised in other walks.

The three conclusions which I have chiefly endeavoured to make clear, are these:—that the tenet of the Inspiration

of the Scriptures is baseless and untenable under any form or modification which leaves to it a dogmatic value;—that the Gospels are not textually faithful records of the sayings and actions of Jesus, but ascribe to him words which he never uttered, and deeds which he never did;—and that the Apostles only partially comprehended, and imperfectly transmitted, the teaching of their Great Master. The establishment of these points is the contribution to the progress of religious science which I have attempted to render.

I trust it will not be supposed that I regard this work in any other light than as a *pioneering* one. A treatise on Religion that is chiefly negative and critical can never be other than incomplete, partial, and preparatory. But the clearing of the ground is a necessary preliminary to the sowing of the seed; the removal of superincumbent rubbish is indispensable to the discovery and extraction of the buried and intermingled ore; and the liberation of the mind from forestalling misconceptions, misguiding prejudices, and hampering and distracting fears, must precede its setting forth, with any chance of success, in the pursuit of Truth.

Nor, I earnestly hope, will the book be regarded as antagonistic to the Faith of Christ. It is with a strong conviction that popular Christianity is not the religion of Jesus that I have resolved to publish my views. What Jesus really did and taught, and whether his doctrines were perfect or superhuman, are questions which afford ample matter for an independent work.

There is probably no position more safe and certain, than that our religious views must of necessity be *essentially* imperfect and incorrect;—that at best they can only form a remote approximation to the truth, while the amount of error they contain *must* be large and varying, and *may* be almost unlimited. And this must be alike, though not equally the case, whether these views are taught us by reason or by revelation;—that is, whether we arrive at them by the diligent and honest use of those faculties with which God has

endowed us, or by listening to those prophets whom He may have ordained to teach us. The difference cannot be more than this: that in the latter case our views will contain that fragment, or that human disguise, of positive truth which God knows our minds are alone capable of receiving, or which He sees to be fitted for their guidance;—while in the former case they will contain that form or fragment of the same positive truth which He framed our minds with the capability of achieving. In the one case they will contain as much truth as we can take in—in the other, as much as we can discover:—but in both cases this truth must necessarily not only be greatly limited, but greatly alloyed to bring it within the competence of finite human intelligences. Being finite, we *can* form no correct or adequate idea of the Infinite:—being material, we *can* form no clear conception of the Spiritual. The question of a Revelation can in no way affect this conclusion; since even the Omnipotence of God cannot infuse infinite conceptions into finite minds,—cannot, without an entire change of the conditions of our being, pour a just and full knowledge of His nature into the bounded capacity of a mortal's soul. Human intelligence could not grasp it; human language could not express it.

"The consciousness of the individual (says Fichte) reveals itself alone;—his knowledge cannot pass beyond the limits of his own being. His conceptions of other things and other beings are *only his conceptions;*—they are not those things or beings themselves. The living principle of a living Universe must be infinite, while all our ideas and conceptions are finite, and applicable only to finite beings. The Deity is thus not an object of knowledge, but of faith;—not to be approached by the understanding, but by the moral sense;—not to be conceived, but to be felt. All attempts to embrace the infinite in the conception of the finite are, and must be, only accommodations to the frailty of man. . . . .

"Atheism is a charge which the common understanding has repeatedly brought against the finer speculations of phi-

losophy, when, in endeavouring to solve the riddle of existence, they have approached, albeit with reverence and humility, the source from which all existence proceeds. Shrouded from human comprehension in an obscurity from which chastened imagination is awed back, and thought retreats in conscious weakness, the Divine nature is surely a theme on which man is little entitled to dogmatize. Accordingly it is here that the philosophic intellect becomes most painfully aware of its own insufficiency. . . . . But the common understanding has no such humility; its God is an Incarnate Divinity;—imperfection imposes its own limitations on the Illimitable, and clothes the inconceivable Spirit of the Universe in sensuous and intelligible forms derived from finite nature!"

This conviction once gained, the whole rational basis for intolerance is cut away. We are all of us (though not all equally) mistaken; and the cherished dogmas of each of us are not, as we had fondly supposed, the pure truth of God, but simply our own special form of error—the fragmentary and refracted ray of light which has fallen on our own minds[1].

But are we therefore to relax in our pursuit of truth, or to acquiesce contentedly in error?—By no means. The obligation still lies upon us as much as ever to press forward in the search; for though absolute truth be unattainable, yet the amount of error in our views is capable of progressive and perpetual diminution; and it is not to be supposed that all errors are equally innocuous. To rest satisfied with a lower degree of truth than our faculties are capable of attaining,—to acquiesce in errors which we might eliminate,—to lie down consciously and contentedly in unworthy con-

[1] "Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be.
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."
In Memoriam.

ceptions of the Nature and Providence of God,—is treason alike to Him and to our own Soul. It is true that all our ideas concerning the Eternal Spirit must, considered objectively, be erroneous; and that no revelation can make them otherwise;—all, therefore, that we require, or can obtain, is such an image or idea of Him as shall satisfy our souls, and meet our needs;—as shall (we may say) be to us subjectively true. But this conception, in order to become to us such satisfying and subjective truth, must of course be the highest and noblest that our minds are capable of forming[1];—every man's conception of God must consequently vary with his mental cultivation and mental powers. If he content himself with any lower image than his intellect can grasp, he contents himself with that which is *false to him*, as well as false in fact,—one which, being lower than he could reach, he must *ipso facto* feel to be false. The Peasant's idea of God—true to him—would be false to me, because I should feel it to be unworthy and inadequate. If the nineteenth century after Christ adopts the conceptions of the nineteenth century before him,—if cultivated and chastened Christians adopt the conceptions of the ignorant, narrow, and vindictive Israelite,—they are guilty of *thinking worse of God*, of taking a lower, meaner, more-limited view of His Nature, than the faculties He has bestowed are capable of inspiring;—and as the highest view we are capable of forming must necessarily be the nearest to the truth, they are wilfully acquiescing in a lie. They are guilty of what Bacon calls "the Apotheosis of error"—stereotyping one particular stage of the blunders through which philosophy passes on its way to truth.

Now to think (or speak) ill of God is to incur the guilt of blasphemy. It is surprising that this view of the matter should so rarely have struck the orthodox. But they are so intently occupied with the peril on one side, that they have

[1] Religious truth is therefore necessarily progressive, because our powers are progressive,—a position fatal to all positive dogma.

become blind or careless to the at least equal peril that lies on the other. If, as they deem, erroneous belief be dangerous and criminal, it must be so whether it err on the side of deficiency or of excess. They are sensitively and morbidly alive to the peril and the sin of not believing everything which Revelation has announced, yet they are utterly blind to what should be regarded as the deeper peril and the darker guilt of believing that Revelation has announced doctrines dishonouring to the pure majesty of God. If it be wrong and dangerous to doubt what God has told us of Himself, it must surely be equally so, or more so, to believe, on inadequate evidence or on no evidence at all, that He ever taught doctrines so derogatory to His attributes as many which orthodox theology ascribes to Him. To believe that He is cruel, short-sighted, capricious, and unjust, is an affront, an indignity, which (on the orthodox supposition that God takes judicial cognizance of such errors) must be immeasurably more guilty and more perilous, than to believe that the Jews were mistaken in imagining that He spoke through Moses, or the Christians in imagining that He spoke through Paul. He is affirmed to be a jealous God, an angry God, a capricious God,—punishing the innocent for the sins of the guilty, —punishing with infinite and endless torture men whom He had created weak, finite, and ephemeral,—nay, whom he had fore-ordained to sin,—a God who came down from Heaven, walked among men, feasted at their tables, endured their insults, died by their hands. Is there no peril in all this?—no sin in believing all these unworthy puerilities of a Creator who has given us Reason and Nature to teach us better things?—Yet Christians accept them all with hasty and trembling dismay, as if afraid that God will punish them for being slow to believe evil of Him.

We have seen that the highest views of religion which we can attain here must, from the imperfection of our faculties, be necessarily inaccurate and impure. But we may go further than this. It is more than probable that Religion, in

order to obtain currency and influence with the great mass of mankind, must be alloyed with an amount of error which places it far below the standard attainable by human capacities. A pure religion—by which we mean one as pure as the loftiest and most cultivated earthly reason can discern—would probably not be comprehended by, or effective over, the less-educated portion of mankind. What is truth to the Philosopher would not be truth, nor have the effect of truth, to the Peasant. The Religion of the many must necessarily be more incorrect than that of the refined and reflective few, —not so much in its essence, as in its forms—not so much in the spiritual idea which lies latent at the bottom of it, as in the symbols and dogmas in which that *idea* is embodied. In many points true religion would not be comprehensible by the ignorant, nor consolatory to them, nor guiding and supporting for them. Nay, *true religion would not be true to them:*—that is, the effect it would produce on their mind *would not be the right one,*—would not be the same it would produce on the mind of one fitted to receive it, and competent to grasp it. To undisciplined minds, as to children, it is probable that coarser images and broader views are necessary to excite and sustain the efforts of virtue. The belief in an *immediate* Heaven of sensible delight and glory will enable an uneducated man to dare the stake in the cause of faith or freedom;—the idea of Heaven as a distant scene of slow, patient, and perpetual progress in intellectual and spiritual being, would be inadequate to fire his imagination, or to steel his nerves. Again: to be grasped by, and suitable to, such minds, the views presented them of God must be anthropomorphic, not spiritual;—and in proportion as they are so they are false:—the views of His Government must be special, not universal;—and in proportion as they are so they will be false[1]. The sanctions which a faith de-

[1] There are, we are disposed to think, several indications in Scripture that the doctrines which Christ desired to teach were put forth by him, not in the language of strict verity (even as he conceived it), but in that clothing which

rives from being announced from Heaven amid clouds and thunder, and attested by physical prodigies, are of a nature to attract and impress the rudest and most ignorant minds—perhaps in proportion to their rudeness and their ignorance: the sanctions derived from accordance with the breathings of Nature and the dictates of the soul, are appreciable in their full strength by the trained and nurtured intelligence alone[1].

The rapid spread and general reception of any religion may unquestionably be accepted as proof that it contains some vital truth;—it may be regarded also as an equally certain proof that it contains a large admixture of error,—of error, that is, cognizable and detectable by the higher human minds of the age. A perfectly pure faith would find too little preparation for it in the common mind and heart to admit of prompt reception. The Christian religion would hardly have spread as rapidly as it did, had it remained as pure as it came from the lips of Jesus. It owes its success probably at least as much to the corruptions which speedily encrusted it, and to the errors which were early incorporated with it, as to the ingredient of pure and sublime truth which it contained. Its progress among the Jews was owing to the doctrine of the Messiahship, which they erroneously believed to be fulfilled in Jesus. Its rapid progress among the Pagans was greatly attributable to its metaphysical accretions and its heathen corruptions. Had it retained its original purity and simplicity—had it been kept free from all extraneous admixtures, a system of noble Theism and lofty

would most surely convey to his hearers the practical essentials of the doctrine—the important part of the idea.—(See Bush's Anastasis, p. 143.)

[1] All who have come much into contact with the minds of children or of the uneducated classes, are fully aware how unfitted to their mental condition are the more wide, catholic, and comprehensive views of religion, which yet we hold to be the true ones, and how essential it is to them to have a well-defined, positive, somewhat dogmatic, and above all a divinely-attested and *authoritative* creed, deriving its sanctions from without. Such are best dealt with by rather narrow, decided, and undoubting minds.

morality as Christ delivered it,—where would it now have been? Would it have reached our times as a substantive religion?—Would truth have floated down to us without borrowing the wings of error? These are interesting, though purely speculative, questions.

One word in conclusion. Let it not be supposed that the conclusions sought to be established in this book have been arrived at eagerly, or without pain and reluctance. The pursuit of truth is easy to a man who has no human sympathies, whose vision is impaired by no fond partialities, whose heart is torn by no divided allegiance. To him the renunciation of error presents few difficulties; for the moment it is recognized as error, its charm ceases. But the case is very different with the Searcher whose affections are strong, whose associations are quick, whose hold upon the Past is clinging and tenacious. He may love Truth with an earnest and paramount devotion; but he loves much else also. He loves errors, which were once the cherished convictions of his soul. He loves dogmas which were once full of strength and beauty to his thoughts, though now perceived to be baseless or fallacious. He loves the Church where he worshipped in his happy childhood; where his friends and his family worship still; where his gray-haired parents await the resurrection of the Just: but where *he* can worship and await no more. He loves the simple old creed, which was the creed of his earlier and brighter days; which is the creed of his wife and children still; but which inquiry has compelled him to abandon. The Past and the Familiar have chains and talismans which hold him back in his career, till every fresh step forward becomes an effort and an agony; every fresh error discovered is a fresh bond snapped asunder; every new glimpse of light is like a fresh flood of pain poured in upon the soul. To such a man the pursuit of Truth is a daily martyrdom—how hard and bitter let the martyr tell. Shame to those who make it doubly so: honour to those who encounter it saddened, weeping, trembling, but

unflinching still. "Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum invenietur; qui nesciunt cum quantâ difficultate sanetur oculus interioris hominis."[1]

To this martyrdom, however, we believe there is an end: for this unswerving integrity there is a rich and sure reward. Those who flinch from inquiry because they dread the possible conclusion; who turn aside from the path as soon as they catch a glimpse of an unwelcome goal; who hold their dearest hopes only on the tenure of a closed eye and a repudiating mind,—will, sooner or later, have to encounter that inevitable hour when doubt will no longer be silenced, and inquiry can no longer be put by; when the spectres of old misgivings which have been rudely repulsed and of questionings which have been sent empty away, will return "to haunt, to startle, to waylay;"—and will then find their faith crumbling away at the moment of greatest need, not because it is false, but because they, half wilfully, half fearfully, grounded it on false foundations. But the man whose faith in God and futurity has survived an inquiry pursued with that "single eye" to which alone light is promised, has attained a serenity of soul possible only to the fearless and the just. For him the progress of science is fraught with no dark possibilities of ruin; no dreaded discoveries lie in wait for him round the corner, for he is indebted for his short and simple creed, not to sheltering darkness, but to conquered light.

The Craig.
Dec. 4, 1850.

St. Augustine.

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THE

CREED OF CHRISTENDOM.

CHAPTER I.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

When an Inquirer, brought up in the popular Theology of England, questions his teachers as to the foundations and evidence of the doctrines he has imbibed, he is referred at once to the Bible as the source and proof of all: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." The Bible, he is told, is a sacred book of supreme and unquestionable authority, being the production of writers directly inspired by God to teach us truth—being, in the ordinary phrase, The Word of God. This view of the Bible he finds to be universal among all religious sects, and nearly all religious teachers; all, at least, of whom, in this country, he is likely to hear. This belief in the Inspiration of the Scriptures (Θεοπνευστια) is, indeed, stated with some slight variations, by modern Divines; some affirming, that every statement and word was immediately dictated from on high: these are the advocates of *Plenary*, or *Verbal Inspiration;* others holding merely that the Scriptural writers were divinely informed and authorized Teachers of truth, and narrators of fact, thoroughly imbued with, and guided by, the Spirit of God, but that the words, the earthly form in which they clothed the ideas, were their own. These are the believers in the *essential Inspiration* of the Bible.

It is obvious that the above are only two modes of stating the same doctrine—a doctrine incapable of being defined or expressed with philosophical precision, from our ignorance

of the modus operandi of divine influences on the mind of man. Both propositions mean, if they have any distinct meaning at all, this affirmation:—that every statement of fact contained in the Scriptures is true, as being information communicated by the Holy Spirit—that every dogma of Religion, every idea of Duty, every conception of Deity, therein asserted, *came from God*, in the natural and unequivocal sense of that expression. That this *is* the acknowledged and accepted doctrine of Christendom is proved by the circumstance that all controversies among Christians turn upon the interpretation, not the authority, of the Scriptures; insomuch that we constantly hear disputants make use of this language: "Only show me such or such a doctrine in the Bible, and I am silenced."—It is proved, too, by the pains taken, the humiliating subterfuges resorted to, by men of Science to show that their discoveries are not at variance with any text of Scripture.—It is proved, by the observation, so constantly forced upon us, of theologians who have been compelled to abandon the theory of Scriptural Inspiration, or to modify it into a negation, still retaining, as tenaciously as ever, the consequences and corollaries of the doctrine; phrases which sprung out of it, and have no meaning apart from it; and deductions which could flow from it alone.—It is proved, moreover, by the indiscriminate and peremptory manner in which texts are habitually quoted from every part of the Bible, to enforce a precept, to settle a doctrine, or to silence an antagonist.—It is proved, finally, by the infinite efforts made by commentators and divines to explain discrepancies and reconcile contradictions which, independently of this doctrine, could have no importance or significance whatever.

This, accordingly, is the first doctrine for which our Inquirer demands evidence and proof. It does not occur to him to doubt the correctness of so prevalent a belief: he is only anxious to discover its *genesis* and its foundation. He immediately perceives that the Sacred Scriptures consist of two separate series of writings, wholly distinct in their character, chronology, and language—the one containing the sacred books of the Jews, the other those of the Christians. We will commence with the former.

Most of our readers who share the popular belief in the divine origin and authority of the Jewish Scriptures, would

probably be much perplexed when called upon to assign grounds to justify the conviction which they entertain from habit. All that they could discover may be classed under the following heads:

I. That these books were received as sacred, authoritative, and inspired Writings by the Jews themselves.

II. That they repeatedly and habitually represent themselves as dictated by God, and containing His ipsissima verba.

III. That their contents proclaim their origin and parentage, as displaying a purer morality, a loftier religion, and altogether a holier tone, than the unassisted, uninspired human faculties could, at that period, have attained.

IV. That the authority of the Writers, as directly commissioned from on High, was in many cases attested by miraculous powers, either of act or prophecy.

V. That Christ and his Apostles decided their sacred character, by referring to them, quoting them, and assuming, or affirming them to be inspired.

Let us examine each of these grounds separately.

I. It is unquestionably true that the Jews received the Hebrew Canon, or what we call the Old Testament, as a collection of divinely-inspired writings, and that Christians, on their authority, have generally adopted the same belief. —Now, even if the Jews had held the same views of inspiration that now prevail, and attached the modern meaning to the word; even if they had known accurately who were the Authors of the sacred books, and on what authority such and such writings were admitted into the Canon, and such others rejected;—we do not see why their opinion should be regarded as a sufficient guide and basis for ours; especially when we remember that they rejected as an Impostor the very Prophet whom we conceive to have been inspired beyond all others. What rational or consistent ground can we assign for disregarding the decision of the Jews in the case of Jesus, and accepting it submissively in the case of Moses, David, and Isaiah?

But, on a closer examination, it is discovered that the Jews cannot tell us when, nor by whom, nor on what principle of selection, this collection of books was formed. All these questions are matters of pure conjecture; and the

ablest critics agree only in the opinion that no safe opinion can be pronounced. One ancient Jewish legend attributes the formation of the Canon to the Great Synagogue, an imagined "company of Scribes," συναγωγη γραμματεων, presided over by Ezra.—Another legend, equally destitute of authority, relates that the collection already existed, but had become much corrupted, and that Ezra was inspired for the purpose of correcting and purifying it;—that is, was inspired for the purpose of ascertaining, eliciting, and affirming the inspiration of his Predecessors. A third legend mentions Nehemiah as the Author of the Canon. The opinion of De Wette—probably the first authority on these subjects—an opinion founded on minute historical and critical investigations, is, that the different portions of the Old Testament were collected or brought into their present form, at various periods, and that the whole body of it "came gradually into existence, and, as it were, of itself and by force of custom and public use, acquired a sort of sanction." He conceives the Pentateuch to have been completed about the time of Josiah, the collection of Prophets soon after Nehemiah, and the devotional writings not till the age of the Maccabees.[1] His view of the grounds which led to the reception of the various books into the sacred Canon, is as follows:—"The writings attributed to Moses, David, and the Prophets, were considered inspired on account of the personal character of their authors. But the other writings, which are in part anonymous, derive their title to inspiration sometimes from their contents, and sometimes from the cloud of antiquity which rests on them. Some of the writings which were composed after the exile—such, for example, as the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Daniel—were put on this list on account of the ancient authors to whom they were ascribed; —others—for example, Chronicles and Esther—on account of their contents; and others again, as Ezra and Nehemiah, on account of the distinguished merit of their authors in restoring the Law and worship of God."[2]

Again: the books of the Hebrew Canon were customarily classed among the Jews into three several divisions—the Books of the Law, the Prophets, and the other sacred

[1] Introduction to the Critical Study of the Old Testament, (by Parker,) 1. 26–35.

[2] De Wette, i. 40.

writings, or Hagiographa, as they are termed—and it is especially worthy of remark that Philo, Josephus, and all the Jewish authorities *ascribed different degrees of inspiration to each class*, and moreover did not conceive such inspiration to be exclusively confined to the Canonical writers, but to be shared, though in a scantier degree, by others;—Philo extending it even to the Greek translators of the Old Testament; Josephus hinting that he was not wholly destitute of it himself; and both maintaining that even in their day the gifts of prophecy and inspiration were not extinct, though limited to few[1]. The Talmudists held the same opinion; and went so far as to say that a man might derive a certain kind or degree of inspiration from the study of the Law and the Prophets. In the Gospel of John xi. 51, we have an intimation that the High Priest had a kind of *ex officio* inspiration or prophetic power.—It seems clear, therefore, that the Jews, on whose authority we accept the Old Testament as *inspired*, attached a very different meaning to the word from that in which our Theologians employ it;—in their conception it approaches (except in the case of Moses) much more nearly to the divine *afflatus* which the Greeks attributed to their Poets.—"Between the Mosaic and the Prophetic Inspiration, the Jewish Church asserted such a difference as amounts to a diversity . . . . . To Moses and to Moses alone—to Moses, in the recording, no less than in the receiving of the law—and to every part of the five books called the books of Moses, the Jewish Doctors of the generation before and coeval with the Apostles, assigned that unmodified and absolute θεοπνευστια, which our divines, in words at least, attribute to the Canon collectively."[2] The Samaritans, we know, carried this distinction so far that they received the Pentateuch alone as of divine authority, and did not believe the other books to be inspired at all.

It will then be readily conceded that the divine authority,

[1] De Wette, i. 39–43. A marked confirmation of the idea of *graduated* inspiration is to be found in Numbers xii. 6–8. Maimonides (De Wette, ii. 361) distinguishes *eleven* degrees of inspiration, besides that which was granted to Moses. Abarbanel (De Wette, i. 14) makes a similar distinction.

[2] Coleridge. Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit, p. 19. As I shall have to refer to this eminent writer more than once, I wish it to be borne in mind, that though not always speculatively orthodox, he was a dogmatic Christian, and an intolerant Trinitarian; at least he always held the language of one.

or proper inspiration (using the word in our modern, plain, ordinary, theological sense), of a series of writings of which we know neither the date, nor the authors, nor the collectors, nor the principle of selection—cannot derive much support or probability from the mere opinion of the Jews;—especially when the same Jews did not confine the quality of inspiration to these writings exclusively;—when a large section of them ascribed this attribute to five books only out of thirty-nine;—and when they asssigned to different portions of the collection different *degrees* of inspiration—an idea quite inconsistent with the modern one of infallibility. —"In infallibility there can be no degrees."[1]

II. The second ground alleged for the popular belief in the Inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, appears to involve both a confusion of reasoning, and a misconception of fact. These writings, I believe I am correct in stating, nowhere affirm their own inspiration, divine origin, or infallible authority. They frequently, indeed, use the expressions, "Thus saith Jehovah," and "The Word of the Lord came to Moses," &c., which seem to imply that in these instances they consider themselves as recording the very words of the Most High; but they do not declare that they are as a whole dictated by God, nor even that in these instances they are enabled to record His words with infallible accuracy. But even if these writings did contain the most solemn and explicit assertion of their own inspiration, that assertion ought not to have, and in the eye of reason could not have, any weight whatever, till that inspiration is proved from independent sources—after which it becomes superfluous. It is simply the testimony of a witness to himself[2], —a testimony which the falsest witness can bear as well as the truest. To take for granted the attributes of a writer from his own declaration of those attributes, is, one would imagine, too coarse and too obvious a logical blunder not to be abandoned as soon as it is stated in plain language. Yet, in the singular work which I have already quoted—singular and sadly remarkable, as displaying the strange inconsistencies into which a craven terror of heresy (or the imputation of it) can betray even the acutest thinkers—

[1] Coleridge, p. 18.

[2] "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (*i. e.* is not to be regarded), John v. 31.

Coleridge says *first*, "that he cannot find any such claim (to supernatural inspiration) made by the writers in question, explicitly or by implication" (p. 16);—*secondly*, that where the passages asserting such a claim are supposed to be found, "the conclusion drawn from them involves obviously a petitio principii, namely, the supernatural dictation, word by word, of the book in which the assertion is found; for until this is established, the utmost such a text can prove is the current belief of the Writer's age and country" (p. 17); —and, *thirdly*, that "whatever is referred by the sacred penman to a direct communication from God; and whenever it is recorded that the subject of the history *had asserted himself* to have received this or that command, information, or assurance, from a superhuman intelligence; or where the Writer, in his own person, and in the character of an historian, relates that the word of God came to Priest, Prophet, Chieftain, or other Individual; *I receive the same with full belief*, and admit its inappellable authority" (p. 27).—What is this, but to say, at p. 27, that he receives as "inappellable" that which, at p. 17, he declares to involve an obvious petitio principii?—that any self-asserted infallibility—any distinct affirmation of divine communication or command, however improbable, contradictory, or revolting —made in any one of a collection of books, "the dates, selectors, and compilers of which" he avers to be "unknown, or recorded by known fabulists" (p. 18),—must be received as of supreme authority, without question, and without appeal?—What would such a reasoner as Coleridge think of such reasoning as this, on any other than a Biblical question?

III. The argument for the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures derived from the character of their contents, will bear no examination. It is true that many parts of them contain views of Duty, of God, and of Man's relation to Him, which are among the purest and loftiest that the human intellect can grasp;—but it is no less true that other passages, at least as numerous and characteristic, depict feelings and opinions on these topics, as low, meagre, and unworthy, as ever took their rise in savage and uncultured minds. These passages, as is well known, have long been the opprobrium of orthodoxy and the despair of Theologians; and so far are they from being confirmatory of the doctrine

of Scriptural inspiration, that nothing but the inconsiderate and absolute reception of this doctrine has withheld men from regarding and representing them in their true light. The contents of the Hebrew Canon *as a whole*, form the most fatal and convincing argument against its inspiration *as a whole*. By the popular creed as it now stands, the nobler portions are compelled to bear the mighty burden of the lower and less worthy;—and often sink under their weight.

IV. The argument for the Inspiration of the Old Testament Writers, drawn from the supposed miraculous or prophetic powers conferred upon the writers, admits of a very brief refutation. In the *first* place, as we do not know who the Writers were, nor at what date the books were written, we cannot possibly decide whether they were endowed with any such powers, or not.—*Secondly*, as the only evidence we have for the reality of the miracles rests upon the divine authority, and consequent unfailing accuracy, of the books in which they are recorded, they cannot, without a violation of all principles of reasoning, be adduced to prove that authority and accuracy.—*Thirdly*, in those days, as is well known, superhuman powers were not supposed to be confined to the direct and infallible organs of the divine commands, nor necessarily to imply the possession of the delegated authority of God;—as we learn from the Magicians of Pharaoh, who could perform many, though not all, of the miracles of Moses;—from the case of Aaron, who, though miraculously gifted, and God's chosen High Priest, yet helped the Israelites to desert Jehovah, and bow down before the Golden Calf;—and from the history of Balaam, who, though in daily communication with God, and *specially* inspired by Him, yet accepted a bribe from His enemies to curse His people, and pertinaciously endeavoured to perform his part of the contract.—And, *finally*, as the dogmatic value of prophecy depends on our being able to ascertain the date at which it was uttered, and the precise events which it was intended to predict, and the impossibility of foreseeing such events by mere human sagacity, and, moreover, upon the original language in which the prophecy was uttered not having been altered by any subsequent recorder or transcriber to match the fulfilment more exactly;—and as, in the case of the prophetical books of

the Hebrew Canon (as will be seen in a subsequent chapter), great doubt rests upon almost all these points; and as, moreover, for one prediction which was justified, it is easy to point to two which were falsified, by the event;—the prophecies, even if occasionally fulfilled, can assuredly, in the present stage of our inquiry, afford us no adequate foundation on which to build the inspiration of the *library* (for such it is) of which they form a part.

V. But the great majority of Christians would, if questioned, rest their belief in the Inspiration of the Old Testtament Scriptures, upon the supposed sanction or affirmation of this view by Christ and his Apostles.—Now, as Coleridge has well argued in a passage already cited, until we know that the words of Christ conveying this doctrine have been faithfully recorded, so that we are actually in possession of his view—and that the apostolic writings conveying this doctrine were the production of inspired men—"the utmost such texts can prove is the current belief of the Writer's age and country concerning the character of the books then called the Scriptures."—The inspiration of the Old Testament, in this point of view, therefore, rests upon the inspiration of the New—a matter to be presently considered. But let us here ascertain what is the actual amount of divine authority attributed to the Old, by the Writers of the New Testament.

It is unquestionable that these Scriptures are constantly referred to and quoted, by the Apostles and Evangelists, as authentic and veracious histories. It is unquestionable, also, that the prophetic writings were considered by them *to be prophecies*—to contain predictions of future events, and especially of events relating to Christ. They received them submissively; but misquoted, misunderstood, and misapplied them, as will hereafter be shown.—Further: however incorrectly we may believe the words of Christ to have been reported, his references to the Scriptures are too numerous, too consistent, and too probable, not to bring us to the conclusion that he quoted them as having, and deserving to have, unquestioned authority over the Jewish mind. On this point, however, the opinions of Christ, as recorded in the Gospel, present remarkable discrepancies, and even contradictions. On the one hand, we read of his saying, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I

am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled."[1] He quotes the Decalogue as "from God;" and he says that "God spake to Moses."[2] It is true that he nowhere affirms the inspiration of the Scriptures, but he quotes the prophecies, and even is said to represent them as prophesying of him[3]. He quotes the Psalms controversially, to put down antagonists, and adds the remark, "the Scripture cannot be broken."[4] He is represented as declaring once positively, and once incidentally[5], that "Moses wrote of him."[6]

On the other hand, he contradicted Moses, and abrogated his ordinances in an authoritative and peremptory manner, which precludes the idea that he supposed himself dealing with the direct commands of God[7]. This is done in many points specified in Matth. v. 34-44;—in the case of divorce, in the most positive and naked manner (Matth. v. 31, 32; xix. 8. Luke xvi. 18. Mark x. 4-12);—in the case of the woman taken in adultery, who would have been punished with a cruel death by the Mosaic law, but whom Jesus dismissed with—"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John viii. 5-11);—in the case of clean and unclean meats, as to which the Mosaic law is rigorous in the extreme, but which Christ puts aside as trivial, affirming that unclean meats *cannot* defile a man, though Moses declared that it "made them abominable." (Matth. xv. 11; Mark vii. 15.) Christ even supersedes in the same manner one of the commands of the Decalogue—that as to the observance of the Sabbath, his views and teaching as to which no ingenuity can reconcile with the Mosaic law[8].

[1] Matth. v. 17, 18. Luke xvi. 17.
[2] Matth. xv. 4-6; xxii. 31. Mark vii. 9-13; xii. 26.
[3] Matth. xv. 7; xxiv. 15. Luke iv. 17-21; xxiv. 27.
[4] John x. 35.
[5] John v. 46. Luke xxiv. 44.
[6] It seems more than doubtful whether any passages in the Pentateuch can fairly be considered as having reference to Christ. But passing over this, if it shall appear that what we now call "the Books of Moses" were not written by Moses, it will follow, either that Christ referred to Mosaic writings which we do not possess; or that, like the contemporary Jews and modern Christians, he erroneously ascribed to Moses books which Moses did not write.
[7] "Ye have heard that it has been said of old time;"—"Moses, for the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives," &c., &c.
[8] See this whole question most ably treated in the notes to Norton, Genuineness of the Gospels, ii. § 7.

Finally, we have the assertion in Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (iii. 16), which, though certainly translatable two ways[1], either *affirms* the inspiration of the Hebrew Canon as a whole, or *assumes* the inspiration of certain portions of it.—On the whole, there can, I think, be little doubt that Christ and his Apostles received the Jewish Scriptures, as they then were, as sacred and authoritative. But till *their* divine authority is established, it is evident that this, the *fifth*, ground for believing the inspiration of the Old Testament merges in the *first*, *i. e.*, the belief of the Jews.

So far, then, it appears that the only evidence for the Inspiration of the Hebrew Canon is the fact that the Jews believed in it.—But we know that they also believed in the inspiration of other writings;—that *their* meaning of the word "Inspiration" differed essentially from that which now prevails;—that their theocratic polity had so interwoven itself with all their ideas, and modified their whole mode of thinking, that almost every mental suggestion, and every act of power, was referred by them *directly* to a superhuman origin[2].—"If" (says Mr. Coleridge) "we take into account the habit, universal with the Hebrew Doctors, of referring all excellent or extraordinary things to the Great First Cause, without mention of the proximate and instrumental causes—a striking illustration of which may be obtained by comparing the narratives of the same event in the Psalms and the Historical Books;—and if we further reflect that the distinction of the Providential and the Miraculous did not enter into their forms of thinking—at all events not into their mode of conveying their thoughts;—the language of the Jews respecting the Hagiographa will be found to differ little, if at all, from that of religious persons among ourselves, when speaking of an author abounding in gifts, stirred up by the Holy Spirit, writing under the influence

[1] The English, Dutch, and other versions render it, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching," &c., &c. (an obviously incorrect rendering, unless it can be shown that γραφη is always used by Paul in reference to the Sacred Jewish Canon exclusively). The Vulgate, Luther, Calmet, the Spanish and Arabic versions, and most of the Fathers, translate it thus: "All divinely inspired writings are also profitable for teaching," &c. This is little more than a truism. But Paul probably meant, "Do not despise the Old Testament, because you have the Spirit; *since you know it was inspired*, you ought to be able to make it profitable," &c.

[2] De Wette, i. 39.

of special grace, and the like."[1]—We know, moreover, that the Mahometans believe in the direct inspiration of the Koran as firmly as ever did the Hebrews in that of their sacred books; and that in matters of such mighty import the belief of a special nation can be no safe nor adequate foundation for our own.—The result of this investigation, therefore, is, that the popular doctrine of the inspiration, divine origin, and consequent unimpeachable accuracy and infallible authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, *rests on no foundation whatever*—unless it shall subsequently appear that Christ and his Apostles affirmed it, and had means of knowing it and judging of it, superior to and independent of those possessed by the Jews of their time.

I have purposely abstained in this place from noticing those considerations which directly negative the doctrine in question; both because many of these will be more suitably introduced in subsequent chapters, and because, if a doctrine is shown to be without foundation or *un*proved, *disproof* is superfluous.—In conclusion, let us carefully note that this inquiry has related solely to the divine origin and infallible authority of the *Sacred Writings*, and is entirely distinct from the question as to the substantial truth of the narrative and the correctness of the doctrine they contain—a question to be decided by a different method of inquiry. Though wholly uninspired, they may transmit narratives, faithful in the main, of God's dealings with man, and may be records of a real and authentic revelation.—All we have yet made out is this: that the mere fact of finding any statement or dogma in the Hebrew Scriptures is no sufficient proof or adequate warranty that it came from God.

It is not easy to discover the grounds on which the popular belief in the inspiration, or divine origin, of the New Testament Canon, as a whole, is based. Probably, when analysed, they will be found to be the following.

I. That the Canonical Books were selected from the uncanonical or apocryphal, by the early Christian Fathers, who must be supposed to have had ample means of judging; and that the inspiration of these writings is affirmed by them.

II. That it is natural to imagine that God, in sending

[1] Letters on Inspiration, p. 21.

into the World a Revelation intended for all times and all lands, should provide for its faithful record and transmission by inspiring the transmitters and recorders.

III. That the Apostles, whose unquestioned writings form a large portion of the Canon, distinctly affirm their own inspiration; and that this inspiration was distinctly promised them by Christ.

IV. That the Contents of the New Testament are their own credentials, and by their sublime tone and character, proclaim their superhuman origin.

V. That the inspiration of most of the writers may be considered as attested by the miracles they wrought, or had the power of working,

I. The writings which compose the volume called by us the New Testament, had assumed their present collective form, and were generally received throughout the Christian Churches, about the end of the second century. They were selected out of a number of others; but by whom they were selected, or what principle guided the selection, history leaves in doubt. We have reason to believe that in several instances, writings were selected or rejected, not from a consideration of the external or traditional evidence of their genuineness or antiquity, but from the supposed heresy or orthodoxy of the doctrines they contained. We find, moreover, that the early Fathers disagreed among themselves in their estimate of the genuineness and authority of many of the books[1]; that some of them received books which we exclude, and excluded others which we admit;—while we have good reason to believe that some of the rejected writings, as the Gospel of the Hebrews, and that for the Egyptians, and the Epistles of Clement and Barnabas, have at least as much title to be placed in the sacred Canon as some already there—the Epistle to the Hebrews, and those of Peter and Jude, for example.

It is true that several of the Christian Fathers who lived about the end of the second century, as Irenæus, Tertullian,

[1] See the celebrated account of the Canon given by Eusebius, where five of our epistles are "disputed;"—the Apocalypse, which we receive, is by many considered "spurious;" and the Gospel of the Hebrews, which we reject, is stated to have been by many, especially of the Palestinian Christians, placed among the "acknowledged writings." De Wette, i. 76.

and Clement of Alexandria, distinctly affirm the inspiration of the Sacred Writings, as those writings were received, and as that word was understood, by them[1]. But we find that they were in the habit of referring to and quoting indiscriminately the Apocryphal, as well as the Canonical Scriptures. Instances of this kind occur in Clement of Rome (A.D. 100), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), and, according to Jerome, in Ignatius also, who lived about A.D. 107[2], Their testimony, therefore, if valid to prove the inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures, proves the inspiration of the rejected Scriptures likewise; and by necessary sequence, proves the error and incompetency of the compilers of the Canon, who rejected them. No one, however, well acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, will be of opinion that their judgment in these matters, or in any matters, ought to guide our own[3].

II. The second argument certainly carries with it, at first sight, an appearance of much weight; and is we believe with most minds, however unconsciously, the argument which (as Paley expresses it) "does the business." The idea of Gospel inspiration is received, not from any proof that *it is so*, but from an opinion, or feeling, that *it ought to be so*. The doctrine arose, not because it was proveable, but because it was wanted. Divines can produce no stronger reason for believing in the inspiration of the Gospel narratives, than their own opinion that it is not likely God should have left so important a series of facts to the ordinary chances of History. But on a little reflection it will be obvious that we have no ground whatever for presuming that God will act in this or in that manner under any given circumstances, beyond what previous analogies may furnish; and in this case no analoga exist. We cannot even form a probable guess *à priori* of His mode of operation;—but we find that generally, and indeed in all cases of which we have any certain knowledge, He leaves things to the ordinary action of natural laws;—and if, therefore, it is "natural" to presume anything at all in this instance, that presumption should be that God did *not* inspire the New Testament

[1] De Wette, i. 63–66.
[2] Ibid. p. 54, &c.
[3] See Ancient Christianity, by Isaac Taylor, passim—for an exposition of what these Fathers *could* write and believe.

writers, but left them to convey what they saw, heard, or believed, as their intellectual powers and moral qualities enabled them.

The Gospels, as professed records of Christ's deeds and words, will be allowed to form the most important portion of the New Testament Collection.—Now, the idea of God having inspired *four* different men to write a history of the same transactions—or rather of many different men having undertaken to write such a history, of whom God inspired *four* only to write correctly, leaving the others to their own unaided resources, and giving us no test by which to distinguish the inspired from the uninspired—certainly appears self-confuting, and anything but "natural." If the accounts of the same transactions agree, where was the necessity for more than one? If they differ (as they notoriously do), it is certain that only one can be inspired;—and which is that one? In all other religions claiming a divine origin, this incongruity is avoided.

Further, the Gospels nowhere affirm, or even intimate, their own inspiration[1]—a claim to credence, which, had they possessed it, they assuredly would not have failed to put forth. Luke, it is clear from his exordium, had no notion of his own inspiration, but founds his title to take his place among the annalists, and to be listened to as at least equally competent with any of his competitors, on his having been from the first cognizant of the transactions he was about to relate. Nor do the Apostolic writings bear any such testimony to them; nor could they well do so, having (with the exception of the Epistles of John) been composed previous to them.

III. When we come to the consideration of the Apostolic writings, the case is different. There are, scattered through these, apparent claims to superhuman guidance and teaching, though not any direct assertion of inspiration. It is, however, worthy of remark that none of these occur in the writings of any of the Apostles who were contemporary with Jesus, and who attended his ministry;—in whom, if in any, might inspiration be expected; to whom, if to any,

[1] Dr. Arnold, Christian Life, &c., p. 487,—"I must acknowledge that the Scriptural narratives do not claim this inspiration for themselves." Coleridge, Confessions, &c., p. 16,—"I cannot find any such claim made by these writers, either explicitly or by implication."

was inspiration promised. It is true that we find in John much dogmatic assertion of being the sole teacher of truth, and much denunciation of all who did not listen submissively to him; but neither in his epistles nor in those of Peter, James, nor Jude, do we find any claim to special knowledge of truth, or guarantee from error by direct spiritual aid. All assertions of inspiration are, we believe, confined to the epistles of Paul, and may be found in 1 Cor. ii. 10-16. Gal. i. 11, 12. 1 Thess. iv. 8. 1 Tim. ii. 7.

Now, on these passages we have to remark, *first*, that "having the Holy Spirit," in the parlance of that day, by no means implied our modern idea of *inspiration*, or anything approaching to it; for Paul often affirms that it was given to many, nay, to most, of the believers, and in *different degrees*[1]. Moreover, it is probable that a man who believed he was inspired by God would have been more dogmatic and less argumentative. He would scarcely have run the risk of weakening his revelation by a presumptuous endeavour to prove it; still less by adducing in its behalf arguments which are often far from being irrefragable.

Secondly. In two or three passages he makes a marked distinction between what he delivers as his own opinion, and what he speaks by authority:—"The Lord says, not I;"—"I, not the Lord;"—"This I give by permission, not commandment," &c., &c. Hence Dr. Arnold infers[2], that we are to consider Paul as speaking from inspiration wherever he does not warn us that he "speaks as a man." But unfortunately for this argument the Apostle expressly declares himself to be "speaking by the word of the Lord," in at least one case where he is manifestly and admittedly in error, viz., in 1 Thess. iv. 15; of which we shall speak further in the following chapter.

Thirdly. The Apostles, *all* of whom are supposed to be alike inspired, differed among themselves, contradicted, depreciated, and "withstood" one another[3].

Fourthly. As we showed before in the case of the Old Testament writers, the Apostles' assertion of their own in-

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 8; and xiv. passim.
[2] Christian Course and Character, pp. 488-9.
[3] Gal. ii. 11-14. 2 Pet. iii. 16. Acts xv. 6-39. Compare Rom. iii., and Gal. ii. and iii., with James ii.

spiration, even were it ten times more clear and explicit than it is, being *their testimony to themselves*, could have no weight or validity as evidence.

But, it will be urged, the Gospels record that Christ promised inspiration to his apostles.—In the first place, Paul was not included in this promise. In the next place, we have already seen that the divine origin of these books is a doctrine for which no ground can be shown; and their correctness, as records of Christ's words, is still to be established. When, however, we shall have clearly made out that the words promising inspiration were really uttered by Christ, and meant what we interpret them to mean, we shall have brought ourselves into the singular and embarrassing position of maintaining *that Christ promised them that which in result they did not possess;* since there can be no degrees of inspiration, in the ordinary and dogmatic sense of the word; and since the Apostles clearly were not altogether inspired, inasmuch as they fell into mistakes[1], disputed, and disagreed among themselves.

The only one of the New Testament writings which contains a clear affirmation of its own inspiration, is the one which in all ages has been regarded as of the most doubtful authenticity—viz., the Apocalypse. It was rejected by many of the earliest Christian authorities. It is rejected by most of the ablest Biblical critics of to-day. Luther, in the preface to his translation, inserted a protest against the inspiration of the Apocalypse, which protest he solemnly charged every one to prefix, who chose to publish the translation. In this protest one of his chief grounds for the rejection is, the suspicious fact that this writer alone blazons forth his own inspiration.

IV. The common impression seems to be that the contents of the New Testament are their own credentials — that their superhuman excellence attests their divine origin. This may be perfectly true in substance without affecting the present question; since it is evident that the excellence of particular passages, or even of the great mass of passages, in a book, can prove nothing for the divine origin of the whole—unless it can be shown that all the portions of it are indissolubly connected. This or that portion of

[1] The error of Paul about the approaching end of the world was shared by all the Apostles. James v. 8. 2 Pet. iii. 12. 1 John ii. 18. Jude, verse 18.

its contents may attest by its nature that this or that special portion came from God, but not that the book itself, including everything in it, had a divine source. A truth, or a doctrine, may be divinely revealed, but humanly recorded, or transmitted by tradition; and may be mixed up with other things that are erroneous: else the passages of scriptural truth contained in a modern sermon would prove the whole sermon inspired and infallible.

V. The argument for Inspiration, drawn from the miraculous gifts of the alleged recipients of inspiration—a matter to which we shall refer when treating of miracles—is thus conclusively met by a recent author: "Shall we say that miracles are an evidence of inspiration in the person who performs them? And must we accept as infallible every combination of ideas which may exist in his mind? If we look at this question abstractedly, it is not easy to perceive the necessary connection between superhuman *power* and superhuman wisdom. . . . . And when we look more closely to the fact, did not the minds of the Apostles retain some errors, long after they had been gifted with supernatural power? Did they not believe in demons occupying the bodies of men and swine? Did they not expect Christ to assume a worldly sway? Did not their master strongly rebuke the moral notions and feelings of two of them, who were for calling down fire from Heaven on an offending village? It is often said that where a man's asseveration of his infallibity is combined with the support of miracles, his inspiration is satisfactorily proved; and this statement is made on the assumption that God would never confer supernatural power on one who could be guilty of a falsehood. What, then, are we to say respecting Judas and Peter, both of whom had been furnished with the gifts of miracle, and employed them during a mission planned by Christ, and of whom, nevertheless, one became the traitor of the garden, and the other uttered against his Lord three falsehoods in one hour?"[1]

So far, then, our inquiry has brought us to this negative conclusion: that we can discover no ground for believing that the Scriptures—i. e. either the Hebrew or the Christian Canonical Writings—are *inspired*, taking that word in its ordinary acceptation—viz. that they "came from God;"

[1] Rationale of Religious Inquiry, p. 30.

were dictated or suggested by Him; were supernaturally preserved from error, both as to fact and doctrine; and must therefore be received in all their parts as authoritative and infallible. This conclusion is perfectly compatible with the belief that they *contain* a human record, and in substance, a faithful record, of a divine revelation—a human history, and, in the main, a true history, of the dealings of God with man. But they have become to us, by this conclusion, *records, not revelations*;—histories to be investigated like other histories;—documents of which the date, the authorship, the genuineness, the accuracy of the text, are to be ascertained by the same principles of investigation as we apply to other documents. In a word, we are to examine them and regard them, not as the Mahometans regard the Koran, but as Niebuhr regarded Livy, and as Arnold regarded Thucydides—documents out of which the good, the true, the sound, is to be educed.

CHAPTER II.

MODERN MODIFICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

THE question examined in the last chapter was *not* "Do the sacred writings contain the words of inspired truth?" but, "Are the writings themselves so inspired as to contain *nothing else?* Are they supernaturally guaranteed from error?" It is clear that these questions are perfectly distinct. God may send an inspired message to man, but it does not necessarily follow that the record or tradition of that message is inspired also.

We must here make a remark, which, if carefully borne in mind through the discussion, will save much misapprehension and much misrepresentation. The word Inspiration is used, and may, so far as etymology is concerned, be fairly used, in two very different senses. It may be used to signify that elevation of all the spiritual faculties by the action of God upon the heart, which is shared by all devout minds, though in different degrees, and which is consistent with infinite error. This is the sense in which it appears to have been used by both the Jews and Pagans of old. This is the sense in which it is now used by those who, abandoning the doctrine of Biblical Inspiration as ordinarily held, are yet unwilling to renounce the use of a word defensible in itself, and hallowed to them by old associations. Or it may be used to signify that direct revelation, or *infusion* of ideas and information into the understanding of man by the Spirit of God, which involves and implies infallible correctness. This is the sense in which the word is now used in the ordinary parlance of Christians, whenever the doctrine of Biblical Inspiration is spoken of;—and it is clear that in this signification only can it possess any *dogmatic value,* i. e. can form the basis of dogmas which are to be received as

authoritative, *because* taught in or fairly deduced from the Scriptures. It is only by establishing this sense of the word as the correct one, that divines are entitled to speak of the Bible, or to use it in controversy, as the "*Word of God.*" To establish the doctrine of "Biblical Inspiration," by *using the word in the first sense*, and then to employ that doctrine, *using the word in its second sense*, is an unworthy shift, common among theologians as disingenuous as shallow.

Now we entirely subscribe to the idea involved in the first, and what we will call the *poetical*, sense of the word Inspiration; but we object to the use of the word, because it is sure to be understood by the world of Readers in the second and vernacular sense; and confusion and fallacy must be the inevitable result.

The ordinary theory of inspiration prevalent throughout Christendom—viz., that every statement of fact contained in the Scriptures is true; that every view of duty, every idea of God, therein asserted, "came from God," in the ordinary and unequivocal sense of that expression, i. e. was directly and supernaturally taught by God to the man who is said to have received the communication—we have discovered to be groundless, and we believe to be untenable. Though still the *ostensible* doctrine, and the basis on which some of the most difficult portions of the popular theology are reared, it has, however, been found so indefensible by acute reasoners and honest divines, that—unwilling to abandon it, yet unable to retain it—they have modified and subtilized it into every shade and variety of meaning—and no-meaning. We propose, in this chapter, to examine one or two of the most plausible modifications which have been suggested; to show that they are all as untenable as the original one; and that, in fact, any modification of the doctrine amounts to a denial of it. "It is, indeed," says Coleridge, "the peculiar character of this doctrine, that you cannot diminish or qualify, but you reverse it."

Two of the most remarkable men of our times, Coleridge and Arnold—one the most subtle thinker, the other the most honest theologian of the age—have, while admitting the untenableness of the common theory of Inspiration, left us a statement of that which their own minds substituted for

it, and which, in our opinion, is equivalent to a negation of it. The attempt, though made in the one case with great fairness, and in the other with great acuteness, thus at once to affirm and deny a proposition, has naturally communicated a vagueness and inconsistency to their language, which makes it very difficult to grasp their meaning with precision. We will, however, quote their own words.

Dr. Arnold writes thus[1]:—"Most truly do I believe the Scriptures to be inspired; the proofs of their inspiration grow with the study of them. The Scriptural narratives are not only about divine things, *but are themselves divinely framed and superintended.* I cannot conceive my conviction of this truth being otherwise than sure." (Here, surely, is as distinct an affirmation of the popular doctrine as could be desired.) He continues:—"Consider the Epistles of the blessed Apostle Paul, who had the Spirit of God so abundantly that never, we may suppose, did any merely human being enjoy a larger share of it. Endowed with the Spirit as a Christian, and daily receiving grace more largely as he became more and more ripe for glory, ... favoured also with an abundance of revelations disclosing to him things ineffable and inconceivable—are not his writings most truly to be called inspired? Can we doubt that in what he has told us of things not seen, or not seen as yet, ... he spoke what he had heard from God; and that to refuse to believe his testimony is really to disbelieve God?" Can any statement of the popular doctrine be more decided or unshrinking than this? Yet he immediately afterwards says, in reference to one of St. Paul's most certain and often-repeated statements (regarding the approaching end of the world), "we may safely and reverently say that St. Paul, in this instance, entertained and expressed a belief which the event did not justify."[2] Now put these statements together, and we shall see that Dr. Arnold affirms, as a matter not to be doubted by any reasonable mind, that when St. Paul speaks of certain things (of God, of Christ,

[1] Christian Course and Character, pp. 486–490.

[2] It is particularly worthy of remark (and seems to have been most unaccountably and entirely overlooked by Dr. Arnold throughout his argument), that, in the assertion of this erroneous belief, St. Paul expressly declares himself to be speaking "by the Word of the Lord."—1 Thess. iv. 15.

and of the last day)[1], he is telling us what he heard from God, and that to doubt him is to disbelieve God; yet, when he is speaking of other things (*one of these things being that very "last great day" of which he had "heard from God"*) he may safely be admitted to be mistaken. What is this but to say, not only that portions of the Scripture are from God, and other portions are from man—that some parts are inspired, and others are not—but that, of the very same letter by the very same Apostle, some portions are inspired, and others are not—and that Dr. Arnold and every man must judge for himself *which are which*—must separate by his own skill the divine from the human assertions in the Bible? Now a book cannot, in any decent or intelligible sense, be said to be inspired, or carry with it the authority of being—scarcely even of containing—God's word, if only *portions* come from Him, and there exists no plain and infallible sign to indicate which these portions are—if the same writer, in the same tone, may give us in one verse a revelation from the Most High, and in the next a blunder of his own. How can we be certain that the very texts upon which we most rest our views, our doctrines, our hopes[2], are not the human and uninspired portion? *What can be the meaning or nature of an inspiration to teach Truth, which does not guarantee its recipient from teaching error?* Yet Dr. Arnold tell us that "the Scriptures are not only inspired, but divinely framed and superintended!"

Dr. Arnold then proceeds to give his sanction to what we must consider as the singular fallacy contained in the Jewish notion, about different *degrees of inspiration*[3]. "It is an unwarrantable interpretation of the word," he thinks, "to mean by an inspired work, a work to which God has communicated his own perfections, so that the slightest error or defect of any kind in it is inconceivable . . . . Surely many

[1] His precise words are these:—"Can any reasonable mind doubt that in what he has told us of . . . . Him who pre-existed in the form of God before he was manifested in the form of man—of that great day when we shall arise uncorruptible, and meet our Lord in the air—he spoke what he had heard from God," &c., &c. Notes, p. 488.

[2] It is certain that many of the early Christians, readers of St. Paul's epistles, *did* rest many of their hopes, and much of the courage which carried them through martyrdom, on the erroneous notions as to the immediate coming of Christ, conveyed in such texts as 1 Thess. iv. 15, and then generally prevalent.

[3] Notes, pp. 486, 487.

of our words and many of our actions are spoken and done by the inspiration of God's spirit, without whom we can do nothing acceptable to God. Yet does the Holy Spirit so inspire us as to communicate to us his own perfections? Are our best words or works utterly free from error or from sin? All inspiration does not then destroy the human and fallible part in the nature which it inspires; it does not change man into God.—With one man, indeed, it was otherwise; but He was both God and man. To Him the Spirit was given without measure; and as his life was without sin, so his words were without error. But to all others the Spirit has been given by measure; in almost infinitely different measure it is true:—the difference between the inspiration of the common and perhaps unworthy Christian who merely said that 'Jesus was the Lord,' and that of Moses, or St. Paul, or St. John, is almost to our eyes beyond measuring. Still the position remains that the highest degree of inspiration given to man has still suffered to exist along with it a portion of human fallibility and corruption."

Now if Dr. Arnold chooses to assume, as he appears to do, that every man who acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, is inspired, after a fashion, and means, by the above passage, simply to affirm that Paul and John were inspired, just as all great and good minds are inspired, only in a superior degree, proportioned to their superior greatness and goodness—then neither we, nor any one, will think it worth while to differ with him. But then to glide, as he does, into the ordinary and vernacular use of the word *inspiration*, is a misuse of language, and involves the deception and logical fallacy, against which we have already warned our readers, of obtaining assent to a doctrine by employing a word in its philosophical or etymological sense, and then applying that assent to a doctrine involving the use of the word in its vernacular sense. A statement or dogma came from God, or it did not. If it came from God, it must be infallible;—if it did not, it must be fallible, and may be false. It cannot be both at the same time. We cannot conceive of a statement *coming from God in different degrees*—being a *little inspired* by Him—being *more or less inspired* by Him. Unquestionably He has given to men different degrees of insight into truth, by giving them different degrees of capacity, and placing them in circumstances favourable

in different degrees to the development of those capacities; but by the *inspiration* of a book or proposition we mean something very distinct from this; and to fritter away the popular doctrine to this, is tantamount to a direct negation of it, and should not be disguised by subtilties of language.

Coleridge's view of Biblical Inspiration is almost as difficult to comprehend as Dr. Arnold's, for though his reasoning is more exact, his contradictions seem to us as irreconcilable. His denial of the doctrine of plenary inspiration is as direct as can be expressed in language. "The doctrine of the Jewish Cabbalists," says he[1], "will be found to contain the only intelligible and consistent idea of that plenary inspiration which later Divines extend to all the canonical books; as thus:—'The Pentateuch is but *one word*, even the Word of God; and the letters and articulate sounds by which this Word is communicated to our human apprehensions, are likewise divinely communicated.' Now for 'Pentateuch,' substitute 'Old and New Testament,' and then I say that this is the doctrine which I reject as superstitious and unscriptural. And yet as long as the conceptions of the Revealing Word and the Inspiring Spirit are identified and confounded, I assert that whatever says less than this, says little more than nothing. For how can absolute infallibility be blended with fallibility? Where is the infallible criterion? And how can infallible truth be infallibly conveyed in defective and fallible expressions?"

This is the very argument we have used above, and which the writer we are quoting repeats elsewhere in that clear and terse language which conveys irresistible conviction[2]:—"The Doctrine in question requires me to believe, that not only what finds me, but that all that exists in the sacred volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was not only inspired by, that is, composed by men under the actuating influence of the Holy Spirit, but likewise dictated by an Infallible Intelligence;—that the Writers, each and all, were divinely informed as well as inspired. Now, here all evasion, all excuse is cut off..... In Infallibility there can be no degrees."

It is not easy to conceive under what modification, or by what subtile misuse of language, Mr. Coleridge can hold a

[1] Letters on Inspiration, p. 19. [2] Ibid. pp. 13, 18.

doctrine which, in its broad and positive expression, he declares to be "ensnaring, thorny, superstitious, and unscriptural," and which, in any less broad and positive expression, he declares "says little more than nothing." We shall see, however, that his notion of Biblical Inspiration resolves itself into this:—that whatever in the Bible he thinks suitable, whatever he finds congenial, whatever coalesces and harmonizes with the *inner* and the *prior* Light, THAT he conceives to be inspired—and that alone. In other words, his idea is, that portions of the Bible, and portions only, are inspired, and those portions are such as approve themselves to his reason. The test of inspiration to Mr. Coleridge is, accordance with his own feelings and conceptions. We do not object to this test—further than that it is arbitrary, varying, individual, and idiosyncratic:—We merely affirm that it involves a use of the word "Inspiration," which to common understandings is a deception and a mockery. His remarks are these[1]:—

"There is a Light higher than all, even the Word that was in the beginning;—the Light, of which light itself is but the *sheckinah* and cloudy tabernacle;—the Word that is light for every man, and life for as many as give heed to it . . . . . Need I say that, in perusing the Old and New Testaments, I have met everywhere more or less copious sources of truth, power, and purifying impulses;—that I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and feebleness? In short, whatever *finds me* bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit 'which, remaining in itself, yet regenerateth all other powers, and in all ages entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God and Prophets.' (*Wisdom* vii.) . . . . In the Bible there is more that *finds me* than I have experienced in all other books together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever finds me brings with it irresistible evidence of having proceeded from the Holy Spirit."[2]

Need we pause to point out what a discreditable tamper-

[1] Letters on Inspiration, pp. 9, 10, 13.

[2] See also, p. 61, where he says (addressing a sceptic), "Whatever you find therein coincident with your pre-established convictions, you will, of course, recognize as the Revealed Word" (!)

ing with the truthful use of language is here? Of how many hundred books may the same not be said, though in a less degree? In Milton, in Shakespeare, in Plato, in Æschylus, in Mad. de Staël, aye, even in Byron and Rousseau, who is there that has not found "words for his inmost thoughts, songs for his joy, utterance for his griefs, and pleadings for his shame?" Yet, would Mr. Coleridge excuse us for calling these authors inspired? And if he would, does he not know that the alleged inspiration of the Scriptures means something not only very superior to, but totally different from, this?

It is necessary to recall to our readers, what Coleridge seems entirely to have lost sight of—that the real, present, practical question to be solved is, *not* "Are we to admit that all which suits us, 'finds us,' 'agrees with our pre-established convictions,' came from God, and is to be received as revealed truth?" *but*, "Are we to receive all we find in the Bible as authoritative and inspired, though it should shock our feelings, confound our understandings, contradict our previous convictions, and violate our moral sense?" *This* is the proposition held by the popular and orthodox Theology. This is the only Biblical question; the other is commensurate with all literature, and all life.

Mr. Coleridge rests his justification for what seems to us a slippery, if not a positively disingenuous, use of language, on a distinction which he twice lays down in his "Confessions," between "Revelation by the Eternal Word, and Actuation by the Holy Spirit." Now, if by the "Holy Spirit," Mr. Coleridge means a Spirit teaching truth, or supernaturally conferring the power of perceiving it, his distinction is one which no logician can for a moment admit. If by the "Holy Spirit," he means a moral, not an intellectual, influence; if he uses the word to signify godliness, piety, the elevation of the spiritual faculties by the action of God upon the heart;—then he is amusing himself, and deluding his readers by "paltering with them in a double sense;"—for this influence has not the remotest reference to what the popular theology means by "inspiration." The most devout, holy, pious men are, as we know, constantly and grievously in error. The question asked by inquirers, and answered affirmatively by the current theology of Christendom, is, "Did God *so* confer his Spirit upon the Biblical

Writers as to teach them truth, and save them from error?" If He did, theirs is the teaching of God;—if not, it is the teaching of man. There can be no medium, and no evasion. It cannot be partly the one, and partly the other.

The conclusion of our examination, so far as conducted, is of infinite importance. It may be stated thus:—

The Inspiration of the Scriptures appears to be a doctrine not only untenable, but without foundation, if we understand the term "Inspiration" in its ordinary acceptation; and in no other acceptation has it, when applied to writings, any intelligible signification at all. The mere circumstance, therefore, of finding a statement or doctrine in the Bible, is no proof that it came from God, nor any sufficient warrant for our implicit and obedient reception of it. Admitting, as a matter yet undecided, because uninvestigated, that the Bible *contains* much that came from God, we have still to separate the divine from the human portions of it.

The present position of this question in the public mind of Christendom is singularly anomalous, fluctuating, and unsound. The doctrine of Biblical Inspiration still obtains general credence, as part and parcel of the popular theology; and is retained, as a sort of tacit assumption, by the great mass of the religious world, though abandoned as untenable by their leading thinkers and learned men;—many of whom, however, retain it in name, while surrendering it in substance; and do not scruple, while admitting it to be an error, to continue the use of language justifiable only on the supposition of its truth. Nay, further;—with a deplorable and mischievous inconsistency, they abandon the doctrine, but retain the deductions and corollaries which flowed from it, and from it alone. They insist upon making the superstructure survive the foundation. They refuse to give up possession of the property, though the title by which they hold it has been proved and is admitted to be invalid.

CHAPTER III.

AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORITY OF THE PENTATEUCH, AND THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON GENERALLY.

THE next comprehensive proposition which our Inquirer finds at the root of the popular theology, commanding a tacit and almost unquestioned assent, is this:—That the Old Testament narratives contain an authentic and faithful History of the actual dealings of God with man;—that the events which they relate took place as therein related, and were recorded by well-informed and veracious writers;—that wherever God is represented as visiting and speaking to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and others, he did really so appear and communicate his will to them;—that the ark, as built by Noah, was constructed under the detailed directions of the Architect of all Worlds; that the Law, as contained in the Pentateuch, was delivered to Moses and written down by him under the immediate dictation of Jehovah, and the proceedings of the Israelites minutely and specifically directed by him;—that in a word, the Old Testament is a literal and veracious history, not merely a national legend or tradition. This fundamental branch of the popular theology also includes the belief that the Books of Moses were written by Moses, the book of Joshua by Joshua, and so on; and further that the Prophetical Books, and the predictions contained in the Historical Books, are bonâ fide *Prophecies*—genuine oracles from the mouth of God, uttered through the medium of his servants, whom at various times He instructed to make known his will and institutions to his chosen People.

That this is the popular belief in which we are all brought up, and on the assumption of which the ordinary language of Divines and the whole tone of current religious literature proceeds, no one will entertain a doubt; and that it has not

been often broadly laid down or much defended, is attributable to the circumstance, that, among Christians, it has rarely been directly questioned or openly attacked. The proposition seems to have been assumed on the one side, and conceded on the other, with equally inconsiderate ease.

Now, be it observed that if the Hebrew Narratives bore, on the face of them, an historical rather than a legendary character, and were in themselves probable, natural, and consistent, we might accept them as substantially true without much extraneous testimony, on the ground of their antiquity alone. And if the conceptions of the Deity therein developed were pure, worthy, and consistent with what we learn of Him from reason and experience, we might not feel disposed to doubt the reality of the words and acts attributed to Him. But so far is this from being the case, that the narratives, eminently legendary in their tone, are full of the most astounding, improbable, and perplexing statements; and the representations of God which the Books contain, are often monstrous, and utterly at variance with all the teachings of Nature and of Christianity. Under these circumstances, we, of course, require some sufficient reason for acceding to such difficult propositions, and receiving the Hebrew Narratives as authentic and veracious Histories; and the only reason offered to us is *that the Jews believed them*[1].

But we remember that the Greeks believed the Legends in Herodotus, and the Romans the figments in Livy—and that the Jews were at least as credulous and as nationally vain as either. We need, therefore, some better sponsors for our creed.

If, indeed, we were only required to accept the authority of the Jews for the belief that they sprung from Abraham,

[1] Even this, however, must be taken *cum grano*. The Jews do not seem to have invariably accepted the historical narratives in the same precise and literal sense as we do. Josephus, or the traditions which were current among his countrymen, took strange liberties with the Mosaic accounts. There is a remarkable difference between his account of Abraham's dissimulation with regard to his wife, and the same transaction in Genesis xx.—Moreover, he explains the passage of the Red Sea as a natural, not a miraculous event; and many similar discrepancies might be mentioned. See De Wette, ii. 42.

Observe also the liberty which Ezekiel considered himself warranted in taking with the Mosaic doctrine that God will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children (c. xviii. passim), a liberty scarcely compatible with a belief on his part that such doctrine was, as alleged, divinely announced.

were captives in Egypt, received a complete code of Laws and system of theocratic polity from Moses, conquered Canaan, and committed manifold follies, frauds, and cruelties in their national career—we might accede to the demand without much recalcitration. But we are called on to admit something very different from this. We are required to believe that Jehovah, the Ruler of all Worlds, the Pure, Spiritual, Supreme, Ineffable, Creator of the Universe—Our Father who is in Heaven—so blundered in the creation of man, as to repent and grieve, and find it necessary to destroy His own work—selected one favoured people from the rest of His children—sanctioned fraud—commanded cruelty—contended, and long in vain, with the magic of other Gods—wrestled bodily with one patriarch—ate cakes and veal with another—sympathised with and shared in human passions—and manifested "scarcely one untainted moral excellence";—and we are required to do this painful violence to our feelings and our understandings, simply because these coarse conceptions prevailed some thousand years ago among a People whose history, as written by themselves, is certainly not of a nature to inspire us with any extraordinary confidence in their virtues or their intellect. They were the conceptions prevalent among the Scribes and Pharisees, whom Jesus denounced as dishonourers of religion and corrupters of the Law, and who crucified him for endeavouring to elevate them to a purer faith.

It is obvious, then, that we must seek for some other ground for accepting the earlier Scriptural narratives as genuine histories;—and we are met in our search by the assertion that the Books containing the statements which have staggered us, and the theism which has shocked us, were written by the great Lawgiver of the Jews—by the very man whom God commissioned to liberate and organize His peculiar People. If indeed the Pentateuch was written by that same Moses whose doings it records, the case is materially altered;—it is no longer a traditional or legendary narrative, but a history by an actor and a contemporary, that we have before us. Even this statement, however, were it made out, would not cast its ægis over the Book of *Genesis*, which records events from four to twenty-five centuries before the time of Moses.

But when we proceed to the investigation of this point,

we discover, certainly much to our surprise, not only that there is no independent evidence for the assertion that Moses wrote the books which bear his name—but that we have nearly all the proof which the case admits of, that he did *not* write them[1], and that they were not composed—at all events did not attain their present form—till some hundreds of years after his death. It is extremely difficult to lay the grounds of this proposition before general readers—especially English readers—in a form at once concise and clear; as they depend upon the results of a species of scientific criticism, with which, though it proceeds on established and certain principles, very few in this country, even of our educated classes, are at all acquainted. In the conclusions arrived at by this scientific process, unlearned students must acquiesce as they do in those of Astronomy, or Philology, or Geology;—and all that can be done is to give them a very brief glimpse of the mode of inquiry adopted, and the kind of proof adduced: this we shall do as concisely and as intelligibly as we can; and we will endeavour to state nothing which is not considered as established, by men of the highest eminence in this very difficult branch of intellectual research.

The discovery in the Temple of the Book of the Law, in the reign of the King Josiah, about B.C. 624, as related in 2 Kings xxii., is the first certain trace of the existence of the Pentateuch in its present form[2]. That if this, the Book of the Law of Moses, existed before this time, it was generally unknown, or had been quite forgotten, appears from the extraordinary sensation the discovery excited, and from the sudden and tremendous reformation immediately commenced by the pious and alarmed Monarch, with a view

[1] "After coming to these results," says De Wette, ii. 160, "we find no ground and no evidence to show that the books of the Pentateuch were composed by Moses. Some consider him their author, merely from traditionary custom, because the Jews were of this opinion; though it is not certain that the more ancient Jews shared it; for the expressions 'the Book of the Law of Moses,' 'the Book of the Law of Jehovah by the hand of Moses,' only designate him as the author or mediator of the *Law*, not as the author of the *Book*.—The Law is ascribed to 'the Prophets' in 2 Kings xvii. 13, and in Ezra ix. 11. The opinion that Moses composed these books is not only opposed by all the signs of a later date which occur in the Book itself, but also by the entire analogy of the history of the Hebrew literature and language."

[2] De Wette, ii. 153.

of carrying into effect the ordinances of this law.—Now we find that when the Temple was built and consecrated by Solomon, and the Ark placed therein (about B.C. 1000), this 'Book of the Law' *was not there*—for it is said (1 Kings viii. 9), "There was nothing in the Ark save the two Tables of Stone which Moses put there at Horeb."[1] Yet on turning to Deuteronomy xxxi. 24–26, we are told that when Moses had made an end of writing the words of the Law in a book, he said to the Levites, "Take this Book of the Law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there to witness against you," &c., &c.

This "Book of the Law" which was found in the Temple in the reign of Josiah (B.C. 624), which *was not there* in the time of Solomon (B.C. 1000), and which is stated to have been written and placed in the Ark by Moses (B.C. 1450), is almost certainly the one ever afterwards referred to and received as the "Law of God," the "Law of Moses," and quoted as such by Ezra and Nehemiah[2]. And the only evidence we have that Moses was the author of the books found by Josiah, appears to be the passage in Deuteronomy xxxi., above cited.

But how did it happen that a book of such immeasurable value to the Israelites, on their obedience to which depended all their temporal blessings, which was placed in the sanctuary by Moses, and found there by Josiah, was not there in the time of Solomon?—Must it not have been found there by Solomon, if really placed there by Moses? for Solomon was as anxious as Josiah to honour Jehovah and enforce his Law[3]. In a word, have we any reason for believing that Moses really wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, and placed it in the Ark, as stated therein?—Critical science answers in the negative.

[1] The same positive statement is repeated 2 Chron. v. 10.

[2] Subsequent references seem especially to refer to Deuteronomy.

[3] Conclusive evidence on this point may, we think, be gathered from Deut. xxxi. 10, where it is commanded that the Law shall be publicly read every seventh year to the people assembled at the Feast of Tabernacles; and from xvii. 18, where it is ordained that each king on his accession shall write out a copy of the Law. It is impossible to believe that this command, had it existed, would have been neglected by all the pious and good kings who sat on the throne of Palestine. It is clear that they had never heard of such a command.

In the first place, Hebrew scholars assure us that the style and language of the Book forbid us to entertain the idea that it was written either by Moses, or near his time; as they resemble too closely those of the later writers of the Old Testament to admit the supposition that the former belonged to the 15th, and the latter to the 5th century before Christ. To imagine that the Hebrew language underwent no change, or a very slight one, during a period of a thousand years—in which the nation underwent vast political, social, and moral changes, with a very great admixture of foreign blood—is an idea antecedently improbable, and is contradicted by all analogy. The same remark applies, though with somewhat less force, to the other four books of the Pentateuch[1].

Secondly. It is certain that Moses cannot have been the author of the *whole* of the Book of Deuteronomy, because it records his own death, c. xxxiv. It is obvious also that the last chapter must have been written not only after the death of Moses, but a long period after, as appears from verse 10. "And there arose not another prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Now, there are no critical signs of style or language which would justify the assumption that the last chapter was the production of a different pen, or a later age, than the rest of the Book.

Thirdly. There are several passages scattered through the Book which speak *in the past tense* of events which occurred after the Israelites obtained possession of the land of Canaan, and which must therefore have been written subsequently—probably long subsequently—to that period. For example: "The Horims also dwelt in Seir before time; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; *as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them.*" Deut. ii. 12. Many other anachronisms occur, as throughout c. iii., especially verse 14; xix. 14; xxiv. 1–3; ii. 20-23.

Finally, as we have seen, at xxxi. 26, is a command to place the book of the Law in the Ark, and a statement that it was so placed. Now as it was not in the ark at the time

[1] De Wette, ii. 161.

when the Temple was consecrated, this passage must have been written subsequent to that event. See also verse 9–13.

Now either all these passages must have been subsequent interpolations, or they decide the date of the whole book. But they are too closely interwoven, and too harmoniously coalesce, with the rest, to justify the former supposition. We are therefore driven to adopt the conclusion of De Wette and other critics, that the Book of Deuteronomy was written about the time of Josiah, shortly before, and with a view to, the discovery of the Pentateuch in the Temple[1].

With regard to the other four books attributed to Moses, scientific investigation has succeeded in making it quite clear, not only that they were written long after his time, but that they are a compilation from, or rather an imperfect fusion of, two principal original documents, easily distinguishable throughout by those accustomed to this species of research, and appearing to have been a sort of legendary or traditionary histories, current among the earlier Hebrews. These two documents (or classes of documents), are called the *Elohistic*, and *Jehovistic*, from the different Hebrew names they employ in speaking of the Supreme Being;—the one using habitually the word ELOHIM, which our translation renders GOD, but which, being plural in the original, would be more correctly rendered *The Gods;*—the other using the word JEHOVAH, or JEHOVAH ELOHIM, *The God of Gods*—rendered in our translation THE LORD GOD[2].

The existence of two such documents, or of two distinct and often conflicting narratives, running side by side, will be obvious on a very cursory perusal of the Pentateuch, more especially of the Book of Genesis; and the constant recurrence of these duplicate and discrepant statements renders it astonishing that the books in question could ever have been regarded as one original history, proceeding from one pen. At the very commencement we have separate and varying accounts of the Creation:—the *Elohistic one,*

[1] It is worthy of remark that the Book of Joshua (x. 13), quotes the Book of Jasher, which must have been written as late as the time of David (2 Samuel i. 18). See De Wette, ii. 187.

[2] There are, however, other distinctive marks. De Wette, ii. 77. Bauer, Theol. des Alt. Test. c. ii. § 1.

extending from Gen. i.-ii. 3, magnificent, simple, and sublime, describing the formation of the animate and inanimate world by the fiat of the Almighty, and the making of man, male and female, in the image of God—but preserving a total silence respecting the serpent, the apple, and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden;—the other, or Jehovistic, extending from Gen. ii. 4-iii. 24, giving a different account of the formation of man and woman—describing the Garden of Eden with its four rivers, one flowing into the Persian Gulf, and another surrounding Ethiopia[1]—narrating the temptation, the sin, and the curse, and adding a number of minute and puerile details, bespeaking the conceptions of a rude and early age, such as God teaching Adam and Eve to make coats of skins in lieu of the garments of fig leaves they had contrived for themselves.

The next comparison of the two documents presents discrepancies almost equally great. The document Elohim, Gen. v. 1–32, gives simply the Genealogy from Adam to Noah, giving SETH as the name of Adam's firstborn son;—whereas the document Jehovah, Gen. iv. 1-26, gives CAIN as the name of Adam's firstborn, and Seth as that of his last[2]. Shortly after we have two slightly-varying accounts of the flood; one being contained in vi. 9–22; vii. 11–16, 18–22; viii. 1–19; the other comprising vi. 1–8; vii. 7–10, 17, 23.

We will specify only one more instance of the same event twice related with obvious and irreconcilable discrepancies, viz. the seizure of Sarah in consequence of Abraham's timid falsehood. The document Elohim (Gen. xx.) places the occurrence in Gerar, and makes Abimelech the offender—the document Jehovah (xii. 10-19), places it in Egypt, and

[1] Cush, or "the land of swarthy men."

[2] "There is," says Theodore Parker, "a striking similarity between the names of the alleged descendants of Adam and Enos (according to the Elohim document the grandson of Adam). It is to be remembered that both names signify *Man*.

I.	II.	
1. Adam.	1. Enos.	The reader may draw
2. Cain.	2. Cainan.	his own inferences from
3. Enoch.	3. Mahalaleel.	this, or see those of Butt-
4. Irad.	4. Jared.	mann, in his Mythologus
5. Mehujael.	5. Enoch.	I. c. vii. p. 171.
6. Methusael.	6. Methusaleh.	
7. Lamech. (Gen. iv. 17-19.)	7. Lamech. (Gen. v. 9-25.)"	

See also on this matter, Kenrick on Primeval History, p. 59.

makes Pharaoh the offender; whilst the same document again (xxvi. 1–11), narrates the same occurrence, representing Abimelech as the offender and Gerar as the locality, but changing the persons of the deceivers from Abraham and Sarah, to Isaac and Rebekah.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied without end; which clearly prove the existence of at least two historical documents blended, or rather bound together, in the Pentateuch. We will now proceed to point out a few of the passages and considerations which negative the idea of *either* of them having been composed in the age or by the hand of Moses[1].

The Elohim document must have been written *after the expulsion of the Canaanites*, and the settlement of the Israelites in the Promised Land, as appears from the following passages:—*inter alia*,—

"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things . . . that the Land vomit not you out also, *as it vomited forth the nations which were before you*" (Lev. xviii. 24, 27, 28.)

"For I was stolen away *out of the Land of the Hebrews*." (Gen. xl. 15.) Palestine would not be called the land of the Hebrews till after the settlement of the Hebrews therein.

"And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; *the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan*." (Gen. xxiii. 2.) "And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, *which is Bethlehem*." (xxxv. 19.) "And Jacob came unto the city of Arba, *which is Hebron*." (xxxv. 27.) These passages indicate a time subsequent to the erection of the Israelitish cities.

The document must have been written *in the time of the Kings*; for it says, Gen. xxxvi. 31, "These are the Kings that reigned in the Land of Edom, *before there reigned any King over the children of Israel*." Yet it must have been written *before the end of the reign of David*, since Edom, which David subdued, is represented in ch. xxxvi. as

[1] The formula "unto this day," is frequently found, under circumstances indicating that the writer lived long subsequent to the events he relates. (Gen. xix. 38; xxvi. 33; xxxii. 32.) We find frequent archæological explanations, as Ex. xvi. 36. "Now an omer (an ancient measure) is the tenth part of an ephah" (a modern measure).—Explanations of old names, and additions of the modern ones which had superseded them, repeatedly occur, as at Gen. xiv. 2, 7, 8, 17; xxiii. 2; xxxv. 19.

still independent. The conclusion, therefore, which critical Science has drawn from these and other points of evidence is, that the Elohim documents were composed in the time of Saul, or about B.C. 1055, four hundred years after Moses.

The Jehovistic documents are considered to have had a still later origin, and to date from about the reign of Solomon, B.C. 1000. For they were written *after the expulsion of the Canaanites*, as is shown from Gen. xii. 6, and xiii. 7. "The Canaanite *was then in the land*." "The Canaanite and Perizzite *dwelt then in the land*." They appear to have been written *after the time of the Judges*, since the exploits of Jair the Gileadite, one of the Judges (x. 4), are mentioned in Numb. xxxii. 41; *after Saul's victory over Agag*, King of the Amalekites, who is mentioned there—"and his King shall be higher than Agag" (Numb. xxiv. 7);—and if, as De Wette thinks, the Temple of Jerusalem is signified by the two expressions (Exod. xxiii. 19; xv. 13), "The House of Jehovah," and the "habitation of thy holiness,"—they must have been composed after the erection of that edifice. This, however, we consider as inconclusive. On the other hand, it is thought that they must have been written *before the time of Hezekiah*, because (in Numb. xxi. 6-9), they record the wonders wrought by the Brazen Serpent, which that King destroyed as a provocative to Idolatry. (2 Kings xviii. 4.) We are aware that many persons endeavour to avoid these conclusions by assuming that the passages in question are later interpolations. But—not to comment upon the wide door which would thus be opened to other and less scrupulous interpreters—this assumption is entirely unwarranted by evidence, and proceeds on the previous assumption—equally destitute of proof—that the Books in question *were* written in the time of Moses—the very point under discussion. To prove the Books to be written by Moses, by rejecting as interpolations all passages which show that they could not have been written by him—is a very clerical, but a very inadmissible, mode of reasoning.

It results from this inquiry that the Pentateuch assumed its present form about the reign of King Josiah, B.C. 624, eight hundred years after Moses;—that the Book of Deuteronomy was probably composed about the same date;—that the other four books, or rather the separate documents

of which they consist, were written between the time of Samuel and Solomon, or from four to five hundred years after Moses;—that they record the traditions respecting the early history of the Israelites and the Law delivered by Moses then current among the Priesthood and the People, with such material additions as it seemed good to the Priests of that period to introduce;—and that there is not the slightest reason to conclude that they were anything more than a collection of the national traditions then in vogue[1].

It should be especially noted that nothing in the above argument in the least degree invalidates the opinion either that Moses was the great Organiser of the Hebrew Polity, or that he framed it by divine direction, and with divine aid;—our reasoning merely goes to overthrow the notion that *the Pentateuch contains either the Mosaic or a contemporary account* of the origin of that Polity, or the early history of that People.

With regard, however, to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which contain an account of the ante-Abrahamic period, a new theory has recently been broached by a scholar whose competency to pronounce on such a question cannot be doubted. Mr. Kenrick, in his Essay on Primeval History, gives very cogent reasons for believing that the contents of these chapters are to be considered, not as traditions handed down from the earliest times, concerning the primitive condition of the human race, and the immediate ancestors of the Jewish nation, but simply as *speculations*, originally framed to account for existing facts and appearances, and by the lapse of time gradually hardened into narrative—in a word, as *suppositions* converted into *statements* by the process of transmission, and the authority by which they are propounded. The call of Abraham he conceives to be "the true origin of the Jewish people, and there-

[1] De Wette and other critics are of opinion that both the Elohistic and Jehovistic authors of the Pentateuch had access to more ancient documents extant in their times, and think it probable that some of these materials may have been Mosaic. De Wette, ii. p. 159.

It seems right to state that this chapter was written before the appearance of Mr. Newman's Hebrew Monarchy, where the whole question is discussed much more fully, and the decision stated in the text is placed upon what appears to us an irrefragable foundation. Mr. Newman's work, pp. 328-338, should be studied by every one who wishes to satisfy his mind on this important point.

fore the point at which, if contemporaneous written records did not begin to supply the materials of history, at least a body of historical tradition may have formed itself."[1] We will not do Mr. Kenrick the injustice of attempting to condense his train of reasoning, which he has himself given in as terse a form as is compatible with perfect clearness. He argues, and in our opinion with great success, that the Jewish accounts of the Creation, the Deluge, the confusion of tongues, &c., were the results of attempts, such as we find among all nations, to explain phenomena which could not fail to arouse attention, wonder, and questioning in the very dawn of mental civilization: but simple and beautiful as many of them are, they betray unmistakable signs of the partial observation and imperfect knowledge of the times in which they originated.

Not only, then, can the so-called Mosaic histories claim no higher authority than other works of equal antiquity and reasonableness, but the whole of the earlier portion of the narrative preceding the call of Abraham, must be regarded as a combination of popular tradition, poetical fiction, and crude philosophical speculation—the first element being the least developed of the three.

Now, what results from this conclusion? It will be seen, on slight reflection, that our gain is immense: religion is safer; science is freer; the temptation to dishonest subterfuge, so strong that few could resist it, is at once removed; and it becomes possible for divines to retain their faith, their knowledge, and their integrity together. It is no longer necessary to harmonise Scripture and Science by fettering the one, or tampering with the other; nor for men of Science and men of Theology either to stand in the position of antagonists, or to avoid doing so by resorting to hollow subtleties and transparent evasions, which cannot but degrade them in their own eyes and degrade their respective professions in the eyes of the observing world. In order to judge of the sad unworthiness from which our conclusion exempts us, let us see to what subterfuges men of high intellect and reputation have habitually found themselves compelled to stoop.

The divine origin and authority of the Pentateuch having

[1] Essay on Primeval History, p. 11.

been assumed, the cosmogony, chronology[1], and antediluvian narrative of Genesis were, of course, received as unimpeachably accurate, and long held unquestioned sway over the mind of Europe. The first serious suspicion of their accuracy — for the progress of astronomical science was rendered formidable only by the absurd decision of the Court of Rome—was caused by the discoveries of modern Geology, which, at first doubtful and conflicting, gradually assumed consistency and substance, and finally emancipated themselves from the character of mere theories, and settled down into the solid form of exact and ascertained science. They showed that the earth reached its present condition through a series of changes prolonged through ages which might almost be termed infinite: each step of the series being marked by the existence of creatures different from each other and from those contemporary with Man; and that the appearance of the human race upon the scene was an event, in comparison, only of yesterday. This was obviously and utterly at variance with the Mosaic cosmogony: and how to treat the discrepancy became the question. Three modes of proceeding were open:—To declare Moses to be right, and the geologists to be in error, in spite of fact and demonstration, and thus forbid science to exercise itself upon any subject on which Holy Writ has delivered its oracles—and this was the consistent course of the Church of Rome: To bow before the discoveries of science, and admit that the cosmogony of Moses was the conception of an unlearned man and of a rude age—which is our view of the case: or, To assume that the author of the Book of Genesis must have known the truth, and have meant to declare the truth, and that his narrative must therefore, if rightly in-

[1] The impossibility of accepting the Biblical chronology of the ante-Abrahamic times as authentic, arises from three considerations:—*first*, its irreconcilability with that of the most cultivated nations of primitive antiquity, and especially with that of the Egyptians, whose records and monuments carry us back nearly 700 years beyond the Deluge—(Kenrick, 57);—*secondly*, the fact that the length of life attributed to the antediluvian Patriarchs, sometimes reaching nearly to 1000 years, precludes the idea of their belonging to the same race as ourselves, without a violation of all analogy, and the supposition of a constant miracle;—*thirdly*, the circumstance that the Hebrew numbers represent the East as divided into regal communities, populous and flourishing, and Pharaoh reigning over the monarchy of Egypt, at the time of Abraham's migration, only 427 years after the human race was reduced to a single family, and the whole earth desolated by a flood.—Mr. Kenrick argues all these points with great force and learning.—Essay on Prim. Hist.

terpreted, agree with the certain discoveries of modern science. This, unhappily, has been the alternative resorted to by our Divines and men of science; and in furtherance of it they adopt, or at least counsel, a new interpretation of Holy Writ, to meet each new discovery, and force upon Moses a meaning which clearly was not in his mind, and which his words—upon any fair and comprehensible system of interpretation—will not bear[1]. Instead of endeavouring to discover, by the principles invariably applied in all analogous cases, what Moses meant from what Moses said, they infer his meaning, *in spite of his language*, from the acknowledged facts of science, with which they gratuitously and violently assume that he must be in harmony.

Instances of this irreverent and disingenuous treatment of the Scriptures are numerous among English Divines—to whom, indeed, they are now chiefly confined: and to show how fairly we have stated their mode of proceeding, we will adduce a few passages from two men of great eminence in the scientific world, both holding high stations in the Universities and in the Church.

Professor Whewell, in his chapter on the "Relation of Tradition to Palætiology," (Phil. Ind. Sc. ii. c. iv.) (which is really a discussion of the most advisable mode of reconciling Geology and Palæontology with Scripture,) speaks repeatedly of the necessity of bringing forward new interpretations of Scripture, to meet the discoveries of science. "When," he asks, "should old interpretations be given up; what *is the proper season for a religious and enlightened commentator to make a change in the current interpretation of sacred Scripture?* (!) At what period ought the

[1] "It happens," observes Mr. Kenrick, "that the portion of Scripture which relates to cosmogony and primeval history is remarkably free from philological difficulties. The meaning of the writer, the only thing which the interpreter has to discover and set forth, is everywhere sufficiently obvious; there is hardly in these eleven chapters, a doubtful construction, or a various reading of any importance, and the English reader has, in the ordinary version, a full and fair representation of the sense of the original. The difficulties which exist *arise from endeavouring to harmonize the Writer's information with that derived from other sources*, or to refine upon his simple language. Common speech was then, as it is now, the representative of the common understanding. This common understanding may be confused and perplexed by metaphysical cross-examination, respecting the action of spirit upon matter, or of Being upon nonentity, till it seems at last to have no idea what *Creation* means; but these subtleties belong no more to the Hebrew word than to the English."—Essay, &c., Preface, xv.

established exposition of a passage to be given up, and *a new mode of understanding the passage, such as is, or seems to be, required by new discoveries* respecting the laws of nature, accepted in its place?" (!) He elsewhere speaks of "the language of Scripture being invested with a new meaning," quoting with approbation the sentiment of Bellarmine, that "when demonstration shall establish the earth's motion, it will be proper to interpret the Scriptures otherwise than they have hitherto been interpreted, in those passages where mention is made of the stability of the earth, and movement of the Heavens." "It is difficult," says Mr. Kenrick, "to understand this otherwise than as sanctioning the principle that the commentator is to bend the meaning of Scripture into conformity with the discoveries of science. Such a proceeding, however, would be utterly inconsistent with all real reverence for Scripture, and calculated to bring both it and its interpreter into suspicion and contempt."

Dr. Buckland's chapter (in his Bridgewater Treatise) on the "Consistency of Geological Discoveries with the Mosaic Cosmogony," is another melancholy specimen of the low arts to which the ablest intellects find it necessary to condescend, when they insist upon reconciling admitted truths with obvious and flagrant error. In this point of view the passage is well worth reading as a lesson at once painful and instructive.—After commencing with the safe but irrelevant proposition, that if nature is God's work, and the Bible God's word, there can be no real discrepancy between them, he proceeds thus:—"I trust it may be shown, not only that there is no inconsistency between our interpretation of the phenomena of nature and of the Mosaic narrative, but that the results of geological inquiry throw important lights on parts of this history, which are otherwise involved in much obscurity. If the suggestions I shall venture to propose require *some modification* of the most commonly-received and popular interpretation of the Mosaic narrative, this admission neither involves any impeachment of the authenticity of the text, nor of the judgment of those who had formerly *interpreted it otherwise in the absence of information as to facts which have but been recently brought to light;* (!) and if, in this respect, geology shall seem to require *some little concession* from the literal interpretation

of Scripture, it may fairly be held to afford ample compensation (!) for this demand, by the large additions it has made to the evidences of natural religion, in a department where revelation was not designed to give information."—(I. 14.) Then, although he "shrinks from the impiety of bending the language of God's book to any other than its obvious meaning," (p. 25,) this theological man of Science—this Pleader who has accepted a retainer from both the litigants —proceeds to patch up a hollow harmony between Moses on the one side, and Sedgwick, Murchison, and Lyell on the other, by a series of suppositions, artificial and strained interpretations, and unwarranted glosses, through which we cannot follow him. Instead of doing so, we will put into a few plain words the real statement in Genesis which he undertakes to show to be in harmony with our actual knowledge of astronomy and geology.

The statement in Genesis is this:—That in six days God made the Heavens and the Earth—(and that *days*, and not any other period of time, were intended by the writer, is made manifest by the reference to the evening and morning, as also by the Jewish Sabbath);—that on the *first* day of Creation—(*after* the general calling into existence of the Heaven and Earth, according to Dr. Buckland[1])—God created Light, and divided the day from the night:—that on the *second* day He created a *firmament* (or strong vault), to divide the waters under the Earth from the waters above the Earth—(a statement indicating a conception of the nature of the Universe, which it is difficult for us, with our clearer knowledge, even to imagine):—that on the *third* day, He divided the land from the water, and called the vegetable world into existence:—that on the *fourth* day, He made the Sun, Moon and Stars—(in other words, that He created on the *first* day the *effect*, but postponed till the *fourth* day the creation of that which we now know to be the *cause*):—that on the *fifth* day, fish and fowl, and on the *sixth*, terrestrial animals and man, were called into being.—And this is the singular system of Creation which

[1] Dr. B. imagines that the first verse relates to the original creation of all things, and that, between that verse and the second, elapsed an interval of countless ages, during which all geological changes preceding the human æra must be supposed to have taken place—in confirmation of which he mentions that some old *copies of the Bible have a break or gap at the end of the first verse*, and that Luther marked verse 3, as verse 1.

Dr. Buckland adopts as conformable to the discoveries of that Science which he has so materially contributed to advance;—in spite of the facts, which he knows and fully admits, that the idea of "waters above the firmament" could only have arisen from a total misconception, and is to us a meaningless delusion;—that day and night, depending on the relation between earth and sun, could not have preceded the creation of the latter;—that as the fossil animals existing ages before Man—(and, as he imagines, ages before the commencement of the "first day" of Creation)—*had eyes*, light must have existed in their time—long, therefore, before Moses tells us it was created, and still longer before its source (our sun) was called into being;—and, finally, that many tribes of these fossil animals which he refers to the vast supposititious interval between the first and second verse of Genesis, are *identical with the species contemporaneous with Man*, and not created therefore till the 21st or 24th verse.

It will not do for Geologists and Astronomers, who wish to retain some rags of orthodoxy, however soiled and torn, to argue, as most do, "that the Bible was not intended as a revelation of Physical science, but only of moral and religious truth." This does not meet the difficulty; for the Bible does not merely use the common language, and so *assume* the common errors, on these points—it gives a distinct account of the Creation, in the same style, in the same narrative, in the same book, in which it narrates the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Revelation to Abraham, the history of Jacob and Joseph. The writer evidently had no conception that when he related the Creation of the Earth, the Sea, and the Sun, he was perpetuating a monstrous error; and that when he related the Fall, he was revealing a mighty and mysterious truth; and when he narrated the promise to Abraham, he was recording a wondrous prophecy. The Bible professes to *give information* on all these points alike: and we have precisely the same Scriptural ground for believing that God first made the Earth, and then the Sun for the especial benefit of the Earth; that the globe was submerged by a flood which lasted forty days; and that everything was destroyed, except the Animals which Noah packed into his Ark—as we have for believing that Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise for a transgression; that God promised

Abraham to redeem the world through his progeny; and that Jacob and Moses were the subjects of the divine communications recorded as being made to them. All the statements are made in the same affirmative style, and on the same authority. The Bible equally professes to teach us *fact* on all these matters. There is no escape by any quibble from the grasp of this conclusion.

In unworthy attempts such as those which Dr. Buckland has perpetrated, and Dr. Whewell has advised, the grand and sublime truth at the basis of the Biblical Cosmogony has been obscured and forgotten,—viz. That, contrary alike to the dreams of Pagan and of Oriental philosophy, Heaven and Earth were not self-existent and eternal but created—that the Sun and Moon were not Gods, but the works of God—Creatures, not Creators.

But another point of almost equal importance is gained by accepting the Historical books of the Old Testament as a collection of merely human naratives, traditions and speculations. We can now read them with unimpaired pleasure and profit, instead of shrinking from them with feelings of pain and repulsion which we cannot conquer, and yet dare not acknowledge. We need no longer do violence to our moral sense, or our cultivated taste, or our purer conceptions of a Holy and Spiritual God, by struggling to bend them into conformity with those of a rude people and a barbarous age. We no longer feel ourselves compelled to believe that which is incredible, or to admire that which is revolting[1]. And when we again turn to these Scriptures with the mental tranquillity due to our new-born freedom, and read them by the light of our recovered reason, it will be strange if we do not find in them marvellous beauties which before escaped us—rich and fertilizing truths which before lay smothered beneath a heap of contextual rubbish —experiences which appeal to the inmost recesses of our consciousness—holy and magnificent conceptions, at once simple and sublime, which hitherto could not penetrate through the mass of error which obscured and overlaid them, but which now burst forth and germinate into light and freedom. In the beautiful language of an often-quoted

[1] See in Dr. Arnold's Sermons on the Interpretation of Scripture, to what straits the orthodox doctrine reduces the best and most honest men.

author (Coleridge, p. 59), "The Scriptures will from this time continue to rise higher in our esteem and affection—the better understood, the more dear—and at every fresh meeting we shall have to tell of some new passage, formerly viewed as a dry stick on a rotten branch, which has *budded*, and, like the rod of Aaron, *brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHECIES.

A PROPHECY, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, signifies a prediction of future events which could not have been foreseen by human sagacity, and the knowlege of which was supernaturally communicated to the prophet. It is clear, therefore, that in order to establish the claim of any anticipatory statement, promise, or denunciation, to the rank and title of a prophecy, four points must be ascertained with *precision*—viz., what the event was to which the alleged prediction was intended to refer; that the prediction was uttered *in specific, not vague, language* before the event; that the event took place specifically, not loosely, as predicted; and that it could not have been foreseen by human sagacity.

Now, there is no portion of the sacred writings over which hangs a veil of such dim obscurity, or regarding the meaning of which such hopeless discrepancies have prevailed among Christian divines, as the Prophetical Books of the Hebrew Canon. The difficulties to which the English reader is exposed by the extreme defects of the received translation, its confused order, and erroneous divisions, are at present nearly insuperable. No chronology is observed; the earlier and the later, the genuine and the spurious, are mixed together; and sometimes the prophecies of two individuals of different epochs are given us under the same name. In the case of some of the more important of them we are in doubt as to the date, the author, and the interpretation; and on the question whether the predictions related exclusively to Jewish or to general history, to Cyrus or to Jesus, to Zerubbabel or to Christ[1], to Antiochus Epiphanes,

[1] The prophecy of Zechariah, which Archbishop Newcome, in conformity with its obvious meaning, interprets with reference to Zerubbabel, Davison

to Titus or to Napoleon; to events long past, or to events still in the remote future—the most conflicting opinions have been held with equal confidence by men of equal learning. It would carry us too far, and prove too unprofitable an occupation, to enumerate these contradictory interpretations: we shall in preference content ourselves with a brief statement of some considerations which will show how far removed we are on this subject from the possession of that clear certainty, or even that moderate verisimilitude of knowledge, on which alone any reasonings, such as have been based on Hebrew prophecy, can securely rest. There is no department of theology in which divines have so universally *assumed* their conclusions and modified their premises to suit them, as in this.

I. In the first place, it is not uninstructive to remind ourselves of a few of the indications scattered throughout the Scriptures, of what the conduct and state of mind of the Prophets often were. They seem, like the utterers of Pagan oracles, to have been worked up before giving forth their prophecies into a species of religious phrenzy, produced or aided by various means, especially by music and dancing[1]. Philo says, "The mark of true prophecy is the rapture of its utterance: in order to attain divine wisdom, the soul must go out of itself, and become drunk with divine phrenzy."[2] The same word in Hebrew (and Plato thought in Greek also) signifies "to prophesy" and "to be mad;"[3] and even among themselves the prophets were often regarded as madmen[4]—an idea to which their frequent habit of going about naked,[5] and the performance occasionally of still more disgusting ceremonies, greatly contributed. That many of

unhesitatingly refers to Christ alone (Disc. on Proph. p. 340, 2nd ed.).—The prediction of Daniel respecting the pollution of the Temple, which critics in general feel no hesitation in referring to Antiochus, many modern divines conceive, on the supposed authority of the Evangelists, to relate to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. A Fellow of Oxford, in a most ingenious work (which had reached a third edition in 1826, and may have since gone through many more), maintains that the last chapters of Daniel were fulfilled in the person of Napoleon, and in him alone. (The Crisis, by Rev. E. Cooper.)

[1] 1 Sam. xviii. 10; x. 5. 2 Kings iii. 15, 16.

[2] Quoted in Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, ii. 192.

[3] Newman, Heb. Mon. p. 34. Plato derived *μάντις* from *μαίνεσθαι*.

[4] 2 Kings ix. 11. Jeremiah xxix. 26.

[5] 2 Sam. vi. 16, 20. 1 Sam. xix. 24. Is. xx. 3. Ezek. iv. 4. 6. 8. 12. 15. 1 Kings xx. 35–38.

them were splendid poets and noble-minded men there can be no doubt; but we see in conduct like this little earnest of sobriety or divine inspiration, and far too much that reminds us of the fanatics of eastern countries and of ancient times.

II. Many, probably most, of the so-called prophecies were not intended as predictions in the proper meaning of the word, but were simply promises of prosperity or denunciations of vengeance, *contingent* upon certain lines of conduct. The principle of the Hebrew theocracy was that of temporal rewards or punishments consequent upon obedience to, or deviation from, the divine ordinances; and in the great proportion of cases the prophetic language seems to have been nothing more than a reminder or fresh enunciation of the principle. This is clearly shown by the circumstance that several of the prophecies, though originally given, not in the contingent, but in the positive form, were *rescinded*, or contradicted by later prophetical denunciations, as in the case of Eli, David, Hezekiah, and Jonah. The rescinding of prophecy in 1 Sam. ii. 30, is very remarkable, and shows how little these enunciations were regarded by the Israelites from our modern point of view. Compare 2 Sam. vii. 10, where the Israelites are promised that they shall not be moved out of Canaan nor afflicted any more, with the subsequent denunciations of defeat and captivity in a strange land. Compare, also, 2 Sam. vii. 12–16, where the permanent possession of the throne is promised to David, and that a lineal descendant shall not fail him to sit upon the throne of Judah, with the curse pronounced on his last royal descendant Coniah—"Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." (Jer. xxii. 30; xxxvi. 30.) See, also, the curious argument as to the *liability of prophecy to be rescinded*, in the same book. (Jer xxxiii. 17–26.) The rescinding of the prediction or denunciation in the case of Hezekiah is recorded in Isaiah xxxviii. 1–5, and that of Jonah in the Book which bears his name, iii. 4–10.

III. It is now clearly ascertained, and generally admitted among critics, that several of the most remarkable and specific prophecies were never fulfilled at all, or only very

partially and loosely fulfilled. Among these may be specified the denunciation of Jeremiah (xxii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30) against Jehoiakim, as may be seen by comparing 2 Kings xxiv. 6;—and the denunciation of Amos against Jeroboam II. (vii. 11), as may be seen by comparing 2 Kings xiv. 23-29. The remarkable, distinct, and positive prophecies in Ezekiel (xxvi., xxvii.), relating to the conquest, plunder, and destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, we can now state on the highest authorities[1], were not fulfilled. Indeed (in ch. xxix. 18) is a confession that he failed, at least so far as spoil went. The same may be said of the equally clear and positive prophecies of the conquest and desolation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xliii. 10–13; Ezek. xxix.; xxx. 1–19), as Dr. Arnold, in his Sermons on Prophecy (p. 48), fully admits[2]. Jeremiah's prophecy of the Captivity of Seventy years, and the subsequent destruction of Babylon (xxv.), have generally been appealed to as instances of clear prophecy exactly and indisputably fulfilled. But in the first place, at the time this prediction was delivered, the success of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem was scarcely doubtful; in the second place, the Captivity cannot, by any fair calculation, be lengthened out to seventy years[3]; and in the third place, the desolation of Babylon ("perpetual desolations" is the emphatic phrase) which was to take place at the end of the seventy years, as a punishment for the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, did not take place till long after. Babylon was still a flourishing city under Alexander the Great; and, as Mr. Newman observed, "it is absurd to present the emptiness of *modern* Babylon as a punishment for the pride of Nebuchadnezzar," or as a fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy.—Gen. xlix. 10 must also be considered to present a specimen of prophecy signally falsified by the event, and being composed in the palmiest days of Judah, was probably little more than a hyperbolical expression of the writer's confidence in the permanence of

[1] Heeren's Researches, ii. 11. Grote, iii. 439.

[2] Grote, *ubi supra*.—Hebrew Monarchy, p. 363.

[3] The chronologies of Kings and Chronicles do not quite tally; but taking that of Jeremiah himself, the desolation began in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 599, was continued in B.C. 588, and concluded in B.C. 583. —The exile ended some say 538, some 536. The longest date that can be made out is 66 years, and the shortest only 43. To make out 70 years fairly, we must date from B.C. 606; the *first* year of Nebuchadnezzar.

her grandeur. Finally, in Hosea we have a remarkable instance of self-contradiction, or virtual acknowledgment of the non-fulfilment of prophecy. In viii. 13 and ix. 3, it is affirmed, "Ephraim shall return to Egypt;" while in xi. 5, it is said, "Ephraim shall not return to Egypt." Isaiah (xvii. 1) pronounces on Damascus a threat of ruin as emphatic as any that was pronounced against Tyre, Egypt, or Babylon. "It is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap." Yet Damascus is to this day the most flourishing city in those countries.

IV. We find from numberless passages both in the prophetical and the historical books, that for a considerable period the Hebrew nation was inundated with false prophets[1], whom it was difficult and often impossible to distinguish from the true, although we have both prophetical and sacerdotal tests given for this express purpose. It even appears that some of those whom we consider as true prophets were by their contemporaries charged with being, and even punished for being, the contrary. In Deut. xviii. 20-22, the decision of the prophet's character is made to depend upon the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of his prophecy. In Deut. xiii. 1-5, this test is rejected, and the decision is made to rest upon the doctrine which he teaches: if this be false he is to be stoned, whatever miraculous proofs of his mission he may give[2]. From Jer. xxix., it appears that the High Priest assumed the right of judging whether a man was a false or a true prophet; though Jeremiah himself does not seem to have been willing to abide by this authority, but to have denounced Priests and the prophets who supported them (Jer. v. 31). Pashur the priest, we learn (xx. 1-7), put Jeremiah in the stocks for his false prophecies; and Shemaiah reproves the Priest Jehoiada for not having repeated the punishment, and is violently denounced by the prophet in consequence (xxix. 24-32).

V. In the case of nearly all the prophets we have little external or independent evidence as to the date at which their prophecies were uttered, and none as *to the period at which they were written down*[3]; while the internal evidence on these points is dubious, conflicting, and, in the

[1] Jeremiah v. 31, xxiii. 16-34. Ezekiel xiv. 9-11.
[2] See also the whole remarkable chapter, Jer. xxviii.
[3] Hebrew Monarchy, p. 352 (note).

opinions of the best critics, generally unfavourable to the popular conceptions.—The Books of Kings and Chronicles, in which many of these prophecies are mentioned, and the events to which they are supposed to refer, are related, were written, or compiled in their present form, the former near the termination of the Babylonian Exile, or somewhere about the year B.C. 530, i. e. from 50 to 200 years[1] after the period at which the prophecies were supposed to have been delivered;—while the latter appear to have been a much later compilation, some critics dating them about 260, and others about 400 before Christ[2].

It is probably not too much to affirm that we have no instance in the prophetical Books of the Old Testament of a prediction, in the case of which we possess, at once and combined, clear and unsuspicious proof of the date, the precise event predicted, the exact circumstances of that event, and the inability of human sagacity to foresee it. There is no case in which we can say with certainty—even where it is reasonable to suppose that the prediction was uttered before the event—that the narrative has not been tampered with to suit the prediction, or the prediction modified to correspond with the event[3]. The following remarks will show how little *certain* is our knowledge, even in the case of the principal prophets.

Isaiah, as we learn in the first and the sixth chapters of his Book, appeared as a Prophet in the last year of the reign of King Uzziah (B.C. 759), and prophesied till the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (B.C. 710). We hear of him in the 2nd Book of Kings and Chronicles, but not till the reign of Hezekiah; except that he is referred to in 2 Chron. xxvi. 22, as having written a history of Uzziah. The prophecies which have come down to us bearing his name, extend to sixty-six chapters, *of the date of which* (either of their composition or compilation) *we have no certain knowledge;* but of which the last twenty-seven are confidently decided by competent judges to be the production of a different Writer, and a later age; and were doubtless composed during the

[1] Amos and Hosea flourished probably about 790 B.C. Jeremiah about 600. Zechariah about 520. De Wette, ii. 436.

[2] Such at least is the most probable result at which critical science has yet arrived. De Wette ii. 248, 265.

[3] De Wette and other eminent Theologians consider that in many cases where the prophecy is unusually definite, this has certainly been done. ii. 357. 363.

Babylonish Captivity, later therefore than the year B.C. 600, or about 150 years after Isaiah. The grounds of this decision are given at length in De Wette[1]. They are found partly in the marked difference of style between the two portions of the Book, but still more in the obvious and pervading fact that the writer of the latter portion *takes his stand* in the period of the Captivity, speaks of the captivity as an existing circumstance or condition, and comforts his captive Countrymen with hopes of deliverance at the hand of Cyrus. Many of the earlier chapters are also considered spurious for similar reasons, particularly xiii. 1, xiv. 23, xxiv., xxvii., and several others. It appears as the general summary result of critical research, that our present collection consists of a number of promises, denunciations, and exhortations, actually uttered by Isaiah, and brought together by command, probably, of Hezekiah, greatly enlarged and interpolated by writings upwards of a century later than his time, which the ignorance or unfair intentions of subsequent collectors and commentators have not scrupled to consecrate by affixing to them his venerable name.

Jeremiah appears to have prophesied from about B.C. 630–580, or before and at the commencement of the Captivity at Babylon, and the chief portion of his writings refer to that event, which in his time was rapidly and manifestly approaching. The prophecies appear to have been written down by Baruch, a scribe, from the dictation of Jeremiah (xxxvi.), and to have been collected soon after the return from exile[2], but by whom and at what precise time is unknown;—and commentators discover several passages in which the original text appears to have been interpolated, or worked over again. Still, the text seems to be far more pure, and the real, much nearer to the professed, date, than in the case of Isaiah.

The genuineness of the Book of Ezekiel is less doubtful than that of any other of the Prophets. His prophecies relate chiefly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened during his time. He appears to have been carried into exile by the victorious Chaldæans about eleven years before they finally consummated the ruin of the Jewish Nation by the destruction of their Capital. His prophecies appear to have continued many years after the Captivity—sixteen according to De Wette[3]. Few pretend to understand him.

[1] De Wette, ii. 364–390.
[2] De Wette, ii. 416 and 396.
[3] De Wette, ii. 426.

Of all the prophetical writings, the Book of Daniel has been the subject of the fiercest contest. Divines have considered it of paramount importance, both on account of the definiteness and precision of its predictions, and the supposed reference of many of them to Christ. Critics, on the other hand, have considered the genuineness of the book to be peculiarly questionable; and few now, of any note or name, venture to defend it. In all probability we have no remains of the real prophecies of the actual Daniel—for that such a person, famed for his wisdom and virtue, did exist, appears from Ezek. xiv. and xxxviii. He must have lived about 570 years before Christ, whereas the Book which bears his name was almost certainly written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, 110 years B.C. Some English Commentators[1] and Divines have endeavoured to escape from the obvious and manifold difficulties of the Book, by conceiving part of it to be genuine and part spurious.—But De Wette has shown[2] that we have no reason for believing it not to be the work of one hand. It is full of historical inaccuracies and fanciful legends; and the opening statement is an obvious error, shewing that the Writer was imperfectly acquainted with the chronology or details of the period in which he *takes his stand*. The first chapter begins by informing us that in the *third* year of King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, besieged and took Jerusalem, and carried the King (and Daniel) away captive. Whereas, we learn from Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar was not King of Babylon till the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim, and did not take Jerusalem till *seven* years later[3]. It would be out of place to adduce all the marks which betray the late origin of this Book;—they may be seen at length in De Wette. It is here sufficient that we have *no proof whatever of its early*

[1] "I have long thought that the greater part of the book of Daniel is most certainly a very late work, of the time of the Maccabees; and the pretended prophecy about the Kings of Greece and Persia, and of the North and South, is mere history, like the poetical prophecies in Virgil and elsewhere. In fact you can trace distinctly the date when it was written, because the events up to that date are given with historical minuteness, totally unlike the character of real prophecy; and beyond that date all is imaginary."—Again, he thinks that criticism "proves the non-authenticity of great part of Daniel: that there may be genuine fragments in it is very likely."—Arnold's Life and Cor. ii. 188.

[2] De Wette, ii. 499.

[3] See the whole argument in De Wette, ii. 484 (note).

date, and that the most eminent critics have abandoned the opinion of its genuineness as indefensible.

III. *Thirdly*, We have already had ample proof that the Jewish Writers not only did not scruple to narrate past events as if predicting future ones—to present History in the form of Prophecy—but that they habitually did so. The original documents from which the Books of Moses were compiled, must have been written, as we have seen, in the time of the earliest Kings, while the Book of Deuteronomy was not composed, and the whole Pentateuch did not assume its present form till, probably, the reign of Josiah;—yet they abound in such anticipatory narrative—in predictions of events long past. The instances are far too numerous to quote;—we will specify only a few of the most remarkable:—Gen. xxv. 23; xxvii. 28, 29, 39, 40; xlix. passim. Numb. xxiv. Deut. iv. 27; xxviii. 25, 36, 37, 64.

We anticipate that these remarks will be met by the reply —"Whatever may be established as to the uncertainty which hangs over the date of those prophecies which refer to the temporal fortunes of the Hebrew Nation, no doubt can exist that all the prophecies relating to the Messiah were extant in their present form long previous to the advent of Him in whose person the Christian world agrees to acknowledge their fulfilment." This is true, and the argument would have all the force which is attributed to it, were the objectors able to lay their finger on a single Old Testament Prediction clearly referring to Jesus Christ, *intended by the utterers of it to relate to him*, prefiguring his character and career, and manifestly fulfilled in his appearance on earth. *This they cannot do.* Most of the passages usually adduced as complying with these conditions, referred, and were clearly intended to refer[1], to eminent individuals in

[1] "We find throughout the New Testament," says Dr. Arnold, "references made to various passages in the Old Testament, which are alleged as prophetic of Christ, or of some particulars of the Christian dispensation. Now if we turn to the context of these passages, and so endeavour to discover their meaning, according to the only sound principles of interpretation, it will often appear that they do not relate to the Messiah, or to Christian times, but are either expressions of religious affections generally, such as submission, love, hope, &c., or else refer to some particular circumstances in the life and condition of the writer, or of the Jewish nation, and do not at all show that anything more remote, or any events of a more universal and spiritual character, were designed to be prophesied."—Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy. Preface, p. 1.

Israelitish History;—many are not prophecies at all;—the Messiah, the Anointed Deliverer, expected by the Jews, hoped for and called for by their Poets and Prophets, was of a character so different, and a career so opposite, to those of the meek, lowly, long-suffering Jesus, that the passages describing the one never could have been applied to the other, without a perversion of ingenuity, and a disloyal treatment of their obvious signification, which, if employed in any other field than that of Theology, would have met with the prompt discredit and derision they deserve[1]. There are, no doubt, scattered verses in the Prophetic and Poetical Books of the Hebrew Canon, which, *as quotations*, are apt and applicable enough to particular points in Christ's character and story;—but of what equally voluminous collection of poems or rhetorical compositions may the same not be said[2]? Of the references made by the Evangelists to such passages, we shall speak hereafter.

The state of the case appears to be this:—That all the Old Testament Prophecies have been *assumed* to be genuine, inspired predictions; and when falsified *in their obvious meaning and received interpretation* by the event, have received immediately a new interpretation, and been supposed to *refer to some other event.* When the result has disappointed expectation, the conclusion has been, not that the prophecy was false, but that the interpretation was erroneous. It is obvious that a mode of reasoning like this is peculiar to Theological Inquirers.

From this habit of assuming that Prophecy was Prediction, and must have its fulfilment—which was prevalent among the Jews as among modern Divines—appears to have

[1] This disingenuousness is obvious in one point especially: the Messianic Prophecies are interpreted *literally* or *figuratively*, as may best suit their adaptation to the received history of Jesus. Thus that "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the lion eat grass like an ox," is taken figuratively: that the Messiah should ride into Jerusalem on an ass, is taken literally.

[2] Perhaps none of the Old Testament prophecies are more clearly Messianic than the following passage from Plato:—*Οὕτω διακείμενος ὁ Δίκαιος μαστιγώσεται, στρεβλώσεται, δεδήσεται, ἐξαυθήσεται σ' ὀφθαλμω, τελευτῶν τάντα κακὰ παθὼν ἀνασκινδυλευθήσεται.* Plato, de Republicâ, l. ii. p. 361, E.

Speaking of this Teacher of Mankind whom he expected, he says, "This just man will scarcely be endured by them—but probably will be scourged, racked, tormented, have his eyes burnt out, and at last having suffered all manner of evils, shall be *impaled*"—or, as the original term will signify, "*Crucified.*"

arisen the national expectation of a Messiah.—A Deliverer was hoped for, expected, prophesied, in the time of Jewish misery (and Cyrus was perhaps the first referred to); but as no one appeared who did what the Messiah, according to Prophecy, should do, they went on degrading each successive Conqueror and Hero from the Messianic dignity, and are still expecting the true Deliverer.—Hebrew and Christian Divines both start from the same assumed and unproven premises, viz.:—that a Messiah, having been foretold, must appear;—but there they diverge, and the Jews show themselves to be the sounder logicians of the two:—the Christians, assuming that Jesus was the Messiah intended (though not the one *expected*), wrest the obvious meaning of the Prophecies to show that they were fulfilled in him;—while the Jews, assuming the obvious meaning of the Prophecies to be their real meaning, argue that they were not fulfilled in Christ, and therefore that the Messiah is yet to come.

One of the most remarkable attempts to retain the sacredness and authority of Hebrew Prophecy, while admitting the non-fulfilment or the inadequate fulfilment of many of its predictions, has been made by Dr. Arnold. The native truthfulness of his intellect led him to a fair appreciation of the difficulties attendant on the ordinary mode of interpreting Prophecy, while the tenacity of his faith (or, to speak more correctly, his affection for what he had been taught to believe and reverence) made him unwilling to renounce views which hold so prominent a position in the orthodox system of doctrine. His method of meeting the perplexity was this:—He conceived that all prophecy had a double meaning—an historical and obvious, and a spiritual or recondite signification—and that the latter only *could* receive a complete and adequate fulfilment. Nay, he went still further, and maintained that Prophecy *must*, from the necessity of the case, embody these two senses—the sense of the God who inspired it, and the sense of the man who uttered it. We will give this singular theory in his own words, extracted from his Sermons on Prophecy.

"Now, first of all, it is a very misleading notion of Prophecy, if we regard it as an anticipation of History . . . . . It is anticipated History, not in our common sense of the word, but in another and far higher sense . . . . History is busied with particular nations, persons, and events; and from

the study of these, extracts, as well as it can, some general principles. Prophecy is busied with general principles; and inasmuch as particular nations, persons, and events, represent these principles up to a certain point, so far it is concerned also with them . . . . Prophecy, then, is God's voice speaking to us respecting the issue in all time of that great struggle which is the real interest of human life, the struggle between good and evil. Beset as we are with evil, within and without, it is the natural and earnest question of the human mind, what shall be the end at last? And the answer is given by Prophecy, that it shall be well at last; and there shall be a time when good shall perfectly triumph. . . . . And this being so, as it is most certain that no people on earth has ever either perfectly served the cause of good, or utterly opposed it, so it follows that no people can, if I may so speak, fully satisfy the mind of Prophecy, because no people purely represents those unmixed principles of good and evil, with which alone Prophecy is properly concerned. And thus it has happened, that those who have attempted to trace an historical fulfilment of the language of Prophecy with regard to various nations, have never done their work satisfactorily, nor on their system was it possible to do it. For the language of Prophecy on these subjects could not be literally accomplished for two reasons: first, because it was not properly applicable to any earthly nation, from the imperfection of all human things; and, secondly, because even that character of imperfect good or evil, which made certain nations the representatives, so to speak, of the principles of good and evil themselves, was not and could not be perpetual . . . . . Thus there may be cases in which no historical fulfilment of national prophecies is to be found at all; but in all cases the fulfilment would fall short of the full strength of the language, because, to say it once again, the language in its proper scope and force was aimed at a more unmixed good and evil than have ever been exhibited in the character of any earthly people . . . . . Generally the language of Prophecy will be found to be hyperbolical, as far as regards its historical subjects, and only corresponding with the truth exactly, *if we substitute for the historical subject the idea of which it is the represen-*

tative[1] . . . . . But if it be asked, why then was the language of Prophecy so strong, if it was not meant to be literally fulfilled? I answer, that the real subject of the Prophecy in its highest sense is not the historical, but the spiritual Babylon; and that no expressions of ruin and destruction can be too strong when applied to the world which is to dissolve, and utterly to perish. And it will be found, I think, a general rule in all the prophecies of Scripture, that they contain expressions which will only be adequately fulfilled in their last and spiritual fulfilment; and that, as applied to the lower fulfilments which precede this, they are and must be hyperbolical."[2]

It is difficult to grapple with a mode of interpretation such as this;—equally difficult to comprehend how an earnest and practical understanding like Dr. Arnold's could for a moment rest satisfied with such a cloudy phantom. Our homely conceptions can make nothing of an oracle which says one thing, but means something very different and more noble;—which, in denouncing, *with minute details*, destruction against Egypt, Babylon, and Tyre, merely threatens final defeat to the powers of Evil;—which in depicting, in precisest terms, the material prosperity reserved for the Israelites, only intended to promise blessings to the virtuous and devout of every age and clime;—and which in describing ancient historical personages, did so always with an *arrière pensée* towards Christ. If Dr. Arnold means to say that the Old Testament Prophecies signified primarily, chiefly, and most specifically, the ultimate triumph of good over evil—of God and Virtue over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil—(and this certainly *appears* to be his meaning);—we can only reply that, in that case, they are Poetry, and not Prediction;—that this was not the signification attached to them either by the Prophets who uttered them, or by the People who

[1] Dr. Arnold conceives the different states and cities towards which are directed the promises and denunciations of Holy Writ, to represent in the prophetic mind certain ideal virtues and vices, &c. Thus Israel means not the Jews, so much as "God's People" in the abstract, the virtuous of the earth in all times: Babylon signifies the world in its *wickedness;* Egypt the world merely in its *worldliness;* while the "Prophetic idea of Edom is the sin of those who offend one of Christ's little ones."

[2] Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy. Var. loc.

listened to them, and that it is precluded by the frequent particularity and precision of their language. To conceive, therefore, this to be the meaning of the God who is alleged to have inspired them, is to imagine that He used incompetent and deceptive instruments for his communications;—and it is certain that had the Prophecies been perfectly and unquestionably fulfilled in their obvious sense, this secondary and recondite signification would never have been heard of. We are surprised that Dr. Arnold did not perceive that to allow of a "double sense" is to give all false prophecy a guarantee against being disproved by the event.

In justification of this idea of a double sense, he continues —"The notion of a double sense in Prophecy has been treated by some persons with contempt. Yet it may be said, that it is almost necessarily involved in the very idea of Prophecy.—Every prophecy has, according to the very definition of the word, a double source; it has, if I may venture so to speak, two authors, the one human, the other divine . . . . . If uttered by the tongue of man, it must also, unless we suppose him to be a mere instrument (in the same sense as a flute or a harp), be coloured by his own mind. The prophet expresses in words certain truths conveyed to his mind; but his mind does not fully embrace them, nor can it; for how can man fully comprehend the mind of God? Every man lives in time, and belongs to time; the present must be to him clearer than the future. . . . . But with God there is no past, nor future; every truth is present to Him in all its extent; so that His expression of it, if I may so speak, differs essentially from that which can be *comprehended by the mind*, or uttered by the tongue of man. Thus every prophecy as uttered by man (that is, by an intelligent and not a mere mechanical instrument), and at the same time as inspired by God, must, as far as appears, have a double sense: one, *the sense entertained by the human mind of the Writer;* the other, *the sense infused into it by God.*"[1]

We must confess our amazement at the obvious and extreme unsoundness of this whole passage. Not only does it

[1] Sermons on Prophecy, p. 51. A little further on he says:—"We may even suppose the prophet to be totally ignorant of the divine meaning of his words, and to intend to express a meaning of his own quite unlike God's meaning!"

painfully remind us of the double meaning so often and so justly charged upon the Pagan oracles—but it assumes the strange and contradictory improbabilities: *first*, that God was unable to convey his meaning to the mind of the Prophet; *secondly*, that He infused this meaning into the words which were uttered, although He could not infuse it into the mind of the man who uttered them; and, *thirdly*, that *we* can see further into the mind and meaning of God than those to whom He spoke;—that they, in expressing the ideas which He had put into their minds, mistook or imperfectly conceived those ideas—but that to us is given to discover a thought which those words contained, but did not express, or which, if they did express it, they were not understood by the Writer to express. Now, either the ideas which God wished to communicate were conveyed to the mind of the Prophet, or they were not:—if they were so conveyed, then the Prophet must have comprehended them, and intended to express them correctly, and of course did express them correctly—for it is monstrous to suppose that God would infuse ideas into a man's mind for the purpose of being communicated to the public, which ideas He yet did not enable him so to communicate:—and then all the above confused subtleties fall to the ground. If, on the other hand, these ideas were not so conveyed to the Prophet's mind, then it must have been the *words* and not the *ideas* which were inspired, and God used the Prophet simply as a flute (a supposition scouted by Dr. Arnold); —and we are thus driven to the equally monstrous supposition that God used words which did not convey his meaning, even to the very favoured individual to whom and through whom He spoke. If God's sense *was* "infused" into the Prophetic language, how could that sense have been missed by the Prophet, and caught only by others in these latter times? and what was the use of language which could not be rightly comprehended except centuries after it was spoken, and by a different People from those to whom it was spoken? If God's sense was *not* infused into the words, through the incompetency of the utterer, how can Dr. Arnold discover it therein? It may be, however, that Dr. Arnold's conception of the case was this, though it is not what we should gather from his language:—that beneath the obvious meaning of the words of Prophecy, as uttered by the Prophet, and

understood by him and his hearers, lay a latent signification, as it were written with invisible ink, which could only be discovered in later ages, and by the light which historical experience and advancing enlightenment throws upon it. No doubt this is possible; but it is unproved, and requires much proof before it can be admitted;—and it is especially worthy of remark, that the supposition, unquestionably a violent one, is rendered necessary only by the *assumption* that the prophecies were *predictions*, coupled with the fact that they have not been fulfilled in their literal meaning;—and it involves the admission, that they were in a manner deceptive, since they were misunderstood, and, by the supposition, *must* have been misunderstood, by the People to whom they were addressed.

Yet all these unnatural explanations are resorted to, all these fatal dilemmas encountered, all this appearance of irreverence and disingenuousness incurred, simply to avoid the conclusion that the Prophets were wise, gifted, earnest men, deeply conversant with the Past—looking far into the Future—shocked with the unrighteousness around them—sagacious to foresee impending evil—bold to denounce spiritual wickedness in high places—imbued, above all, with an unfailing faith, peculiarly strong among their people, that national delinquency and national virtue would alike meet with a temporal and inevitable retribution—and gifted "with the glorious faculty of poetic hope, exerted on human prospects, and presenting its results with the vividness of prophecy;"—but Prophets in no stricter sense than this.

CHAPTER V.

THEISM OF THE JEWS IMPURE AND PROGRESSIVE.

It is an assumption of the popular theology, and an almost universal belief in the popular mind, that the Jewish nation was selected by the Almighty to preserve and carry down to later ages a knowledge of the One true God ;—that the Patriarchs possessed this knowledge ;—that Moses delivered and enforced this doctrine as the fundamental tenet of the national creed ;—and that it was, in fact, the received and distinctive dogma of the Hebrew People. This alleged possession of the true faith by one only people, while all surrounding tribes were lost in Polytheism, or something worse, has been adduced by divines in general as a proof of the truth of the sacred history, and of the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation, and forms, indeed, one of the standard arguments of Theologians in the present day. Paley, the actual text-book of one of our Universities, writes of it thus:—

"Undoubtedly our Saviour assumes the divine origin of the Mosaic Institution ; and, independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to assign any other cause for the commencement or existence of that Institution ; especially for the singular circumstance of the Jews adhering to the Unity, when every other people slid into polytheism ; for their being men in religion, children in everything else ; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, superior to the most improved in their sentiments and doctrines relating to the Deity."[1]

Milman[2] speaks of the pure monotheism of the Jews in a similar strain :—

"The religious history of this people is no less singular.

[1] Paley's Evidences of Christianity. [2] History of the Jews, i. 4.

In the narrow slip of land inhabited by their tribes, the worship of one Almighty Creator of the Universe subsists, as in its only sanctuary. *In every stage of Society, under the pastoral tent of Abraham, and in the sumptuous Temple of Solomon, the same creed maintains its inviolable simplicity.* . . . . . Nor is this merely a sublime speculative tenet; it is the basis of their civil constitution, and of their national character. As there is but one Almighty God, so there is but one People under his special protection, the descendants of Abraham."

Now the actual state of the case seems to be this—and it may be read so clearly in every page of Holy Writ, that how it could have been so long ignored is a striking proof how completely we read our Bible through the spectacles of our theology;—that the Jews as a nation were not *monotheists*—i. e., believers in the exclusive existence of one sole God—till a very late period of their history[1];—that their early and popular notions of the Deity were eminently coarse, low, and unworthy;—that among them, as among all other nations, the conceptions of God formed by individuals varied according to their intellectual and spiritual capacities, being poor and anthropomorphic among the ignorant and coarse-minded, pure and lofty among the virtuous and richly-gifted;—and, finally, that these conceptions gradually improved, and became purified and ennobled, as the Hebrews advanced in civilization—being, generally speaking, lowest in the Historical Books, amended in the prophetical Writings, and reaching their highest elevation among the Poets of the Nation.

In its progress from Fetichism to pure Theism, the human mind generally passes through three stages—or, to speak more correctly, man's idea of God passes through three forms of development. We have Him represented first as the *God of the individual or family;* then as the God of the *nation;* lastly, as the God of the *human race.*—Now we find all these three views of Deity in the Old Testament —sometimes, it is true, strangely jumbled together, as might be expected in books written by different persons at different times—but on the whole bearing pretty distinct marks of the periods at which they respectively prevailed.

[1] Bauer thinks not till after the Babylonian Captivity.—Theol. des Alt. Test., i. 4.

The representations of God in the history of Abraham leave little doubt that the God whom he worshipped was a *family God*, selected, probably, by him for some reason unknown to us, out of a number of others who were worshipped by his fathers and his tribe. We are expressly told that the father and grandfather of Abraham "worshipped other Gods;"—and the representations given of the God of Abraham, and of his proceedings during the lives of the three Patriarchs, are so mean and material that it is difficult to conceive how a knowledge of the One true God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, could have been ascribed to any of them. God appears to Abraham with two angels in the form of men—(they are spoken of as "three men")—sits at the door of his tent—partakes of his repast—is angry at the laughter of Sarah, and an altercation takes place between them; after which He discusses with him the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and informs him that He is going down thither to see whether the reports which have reached him are correct[1]. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor: and *they served other Gods.*" (Joshua xxiv. 2.) "The God of Abraham and the God of Nachor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us." (Gen. xxxi. 53.) There are not wanting many traces of Polytheism in the earlier portions of Hebrew History. The expression *Jehovah Elohim*, "The God of Gods," seems to indicate this. Bauer thinks that "the Elohim, who were probably at one time worshipped as equal Gods, are in Genesis recognized as subordinate deities, with whom Jehovah, the highest Eloah, enters into Council." (Theol. des Alt. Test. i. 3.) It will be remembered that Laban, a near relative of Abraham, whose sister he had expressly selected as his son Isaac's wife, pursued Jacob for having "stolen his Gods." (Gen. xxxi. 30.) He, therefore, worshipped fetiches. In Gen. xxxv. 2–4, we find Jacob collecting the strange Gods worshipped

[1] Bauer observes that the Samaritan and Arabian translators, "from an anxious apprehension lest a corporeal existence should be attributed to the Deity, frequently substituted the expression *angel of God*, for the names Jehovah and Elohim." Thus they have "Ye shall be as the angels of God," instead of "Ye shall be as Gods" (Gen. ii. 5); "In the likeness of the angel of God made he him" (Gen. v. 1); "The angel of God went up from Abraham" (Gen. xvii. 22), and so on.

by his household, and hiding them under an oak. It is certainly remarkable that both Abraham and Isaac should insist upon their sons marrying into an idolatrous family, if they had really believed their own God to be the only one.

Jacob's ideas of God are, as might be expected from his mean and tricky character, even lower than those of Abraham. He makes a *condition*, on which he will *select* Jehovah to be *his* God, and will give Him a tithe of all his possessions (Gen. xxviii. 20);—he represents Him as his confidant in cheating Laban, and wrestles with Him bodily to extort a blessing. Who, after reading such passages, can for a moment accept the belief that Jacob and Job worshipped the same God?

In process of time the descendants of Abraham multiplied and became a numerous people, and naturally continued the worship of that God who had done so much for their forefathers. Thus the *family God* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, gradually enlarged into the *national God* of the Israelites, to whose worship they adhered with greater or less tenacity, with greater or less exclusiveness, during their residence in Egypt. As the history proceeds the conceptions of this God seem to become purer and loftier, till in the mind of Moses, an intellectual and highly-educated man, versed in all the learning of the Egyptians, they often (as far as we can guess what came from him), reached to a sublime simplicity of expression rarely surpassed. Stil there is no reason to suppose that Moses disbelieved in the existence of other Gods;—the God whom he serves is still "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;"—He is never asserted to be the *only* God; the existence and power of rival Deities is never denied, but is even admitted by implication. All that Moses claims for Jehovah is, not that he is the *Sole* God, but that he is superior to all others. "Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the Gods?" (Ex. xv. 11[1].) And he represents him to Pharaoh, by Jehovah's own command, as the "God of the Hebrews," not as the Supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth. Even in the delivery of the Commandments, the great foundation of the Law, it is not said, "There is no God but Jehovah," but only "I

[1] Jethro says: "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all Gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them all."—(Exod. xviii. 11.)

am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the House of Bondage; *Thou shalt have* no other Gods beside me (or before me)." The whole of the xxivth chapter of Joshua confirms this view: he there urges the Israelites to choose Jehovah, not as the only God, whom to desert would be to become Atheists, but as a God whose bounties to them had been so great that it would be black ingratitude not to prefer him to all others. The whole history of the lapses of the Jewish Nation into idolatry also negative the idea of their having been really monotheists. The worship of the golden calf and the Canaanitish Gods was quite natural on the supposition of Jehovah being merely a paramount and preferred God:—monstrous, if they had believed him to be the only one. Moreover, their idolatry is always spoken of as *infidelity*, not as *atheism*.

As civilization advanced, prophets, sages, and poets arose among the Hebrews, to whom the limited and anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity, prevalent among the people, were painfully inadequate and revolting;—and they endeavoured by nobler representations of the object of their worship to convert the national religion into a pure theism; in which, however, it is thought by many that they did not succeed till after the Captivity. After this idea had once taken root, the nation never showed any disposition to relapse into idolatry. And even to the latest period of the Canonical writings we find representations both of the nature and attributes of Jehovah so utterly discrepant as to leave no doubt that among the Jews, as among all other nations, the God of the wise and the God of the ignorant—the God of the Priests and the God of the Prophets—were the embodiment of two very different classes of ideas. Let any one compare the partial, unstable, revengeful, and deceitful God of Exodus and Numbers, with the sublime and unique Deity of Job, and the nobler Psalms, or even the God of Isaiah with the God of Ezekiel and Daniel—and he can scarcely fail to admit that the conception of the One living and true God was a plant of slow and gradual growth in the Hebrew mind, and was due not to Moses, the Patriarchs, or the Priests, but to the superiority of individual minds at various periods of their History. Compare the following representations which we have arranged in parallel columns.

And Jehovah spake to Moses, saying—Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.—And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, . . . and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee.—Exod. xxv. 8, 21–22.

But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this House that I have builded!—1 Kings viii. 27.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?—Ps. cxxxix. 7–10.

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, that the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle; and Jehovah talked with Moses.—And Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.—Exod. xxxiii. 9, 11.

For they have heard that thou, Jehovah, art among this People, that thou, Jehovah, art seen face to face.—Numbers xiv. 14.

Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.—Job ix. 11.

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left-hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.—Job xxiii. 8, 9.

And Jehovah said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen.—Exod. xxxiii. 21–24.

And Moses returned to the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.—Exod. v. 22, 23.

And Jehovah said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.

And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand?

O Jehovah my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty: Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the Heavens like a curtain; Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind.—Psalm civ. 1–3.

Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth; but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment.—Job ix. 2, 3, 32.

Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?—Job iv. 17.

The counsel of Jehovah standeth for ever, and the thoughts of His heart unto all generations.—Ps. xxxiii. 11.

Wherefore should the Egyptians

I know that whatsoever God doeth,

speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy People: Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.—Exod. xxxii. 9–14.

it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it. —Eccles. iii. 14.

The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent.—1 Sam. xv. 29.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak now in the ears of the People, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, Jewels of silver, and Jewels of gold. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.—Psalm xv. 1, 2.

And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians, Jewels of silver, and Jewels of gold, and raiment. And Jehovah gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them. And they spoiled the Egyptians.—Exod. iii. 21, 22; xi. 2, 3; xii. 35, 36.

And Jehovah said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And Jehovah said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.—1 Kings xxii. 20–23.

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth. He loved righteousness and judgment. —Ps. xxxiii. 4, 5.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.—Prov. xii. 22.

And they went in unto Noah in the ark, and *the Lord shut him in.* —Gen. vii. 16.

☞ The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.—Prov. xv. 3.

And Jehovah *came down* to see the

Jehovah looketh from Heaven: he

city and the tower which the children of men builded.—Gen. xi. 5.

And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.—Gen. viii. 20, 21.

But ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord.—Num. xxviii. 27.

And ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour, unto the Lord, thirteen bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish.—Num. xxix. 13, 36.

beholdeth all the sons of men.—Psalm xxxiii. 13.

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving.—Psalm l. 9–14.

For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering.—Ps. li. 16.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.—Isaiah i. 11.

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.—Micah vi. 6–8.

CHAPTER VI.

ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS.

THE current idea respecting the nature of the Gospel History is, that the four Evangelists were eye-witnesses (or the amanuenses of eye-witnesses) of the events which they relate; and that we have, in fact, embodied in their narratives, four independent and corroborative testimonies to the words and deeds of Christ. Their substantial agreement is appealed to in proof of their fidelity, and their numerous and circumstantial discrepancies are accepted as proof of their independence[1]. Let us examine what foundation can be discovered for this current opinion. Have we any reason to believe that all the Evangelists, or that any of them, were companions of Christ—eye and ear-witnesses of his career? And if not, what does critical Science teach us of the probable origin of the four Gospels?

[1] Thus Paley says, "The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to point out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy or fraud."—Paley's Evidences, p. 414.

Again, Lardner says, "I have all my days read and admired the first three evangelists, as independent witnesses, and I know not how to forbear ranking the other opinion among those bold as well as groundless assertions in which critics too often indulge, *without considering the consequences.*"—Dr. Lardner, like many other divines, required to be reminded that critics have nothing to do with consequences, but only with truths, and that (to use the language of Algernon Sidney), "a consequence cannot destroy a truth."

The first gospel has come down to us under the title of the Gospel of, or according to, St. Matthew; and the tradition of the Church is that it was written (probably about A.D. 68) by Matthew, the publican, one of the twelve apostles, the same who was called by Jesus while "sitting at the receipt of custom." This is distinctly stated by several of the early fathers, as the received opinion or tradition—as by Papias (A.D. 116), Irenæus (A.D. 178), Origen (A.D. 230), Epiphanius (A.D. 368), and Jerome (A.D. 392)[1]. All these fathers, however, without exception, expressly affirm that Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew language, whereas the Gospel which *we* receive as Matthew's is written in Greek; and not only have we no account of its having been translated, and no guarantee of such translation being a faithful one, but learned men are satisfied from internal evidence that *it is not a translation at all*, but must have been originally written in Greek[2]. Our present Gospel, therefore, cannot be *the* Gospel to which the fathers above cited refer. It would appear simply that Matthew did write a history, or rather *memorabilia*, of Christ (for the expression τα λογια says no more), but that this was something quite different from our Gospel[3]. This notion is confirmed by the fact that the Ebionites and Nazarenes, two Christian sects, possessed a Hebrew Gospel, which they considered to be the only genuine one, and which they called the Gospel

[1] Papias, whose information on this as on other matters seems to have been derived from John, who is called "the Presbyter," an elder of the Church at Ephesus, simply says, "Matthew wrote the divine oracles (τα λογια) *in the Hebrew tongue*, and every man interpreted them as he was able."—Irenæus says, "Matthew, then, among the Jews, wrote a Gospel *in their own language*, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome."—Origen and Jerome both state that (according to the tradition come down to them) the first Gospel was written by Matthew, the Publican, *in Hebrew*.

[2] Hug, in a most luminous and learned essay, has succeeded in rendering this, if not certain, at least in the highest degree probable; and his views are supported by Erasmus, Webster, Paulus, and De Wette.—The only critic of equal eminence who adopts the opposite opinion, is Eichhorn.

[3] It seems to us very probable, however, as Hennell suggests, "that some one after Matthew wrote the Greek Gospel which has come down to us, incorporating these Hebrew λογια (and perhaps mainly framed out of them), whence it was called the Gospel *according* to Matthew, and in the second century came to be considered as the work of the Apostle."—Hennell's Origin of Christianity, p. 124.

according to Matthew[1]. It appears, however, to have been so materially different from our first gospel as entirely to

[1] Hug, Introd. part ii. § 7, pp. 317, 320, 392.—Jerome allows that many considered it to have been the genuine original Gospel of Matthew.—Thirlwall's Introd. to Schleiermacher, 48-50, and notes.

Since writing the above, I have read Norton's dissertation on this subject, in the notes to his "Genuineness of the Gospels." He holds to the opinion that our Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew, and was in fact the same as the Gospel of the Hebrews current among the Ebionites and Nazarenes, with the exception of certain omissions, corruptions, and interpolations, which he conceives to have crept into the Ebionite Gospel, not into our Greek Gospel. I cannot think his arguments conclusive; indeed many of them are mere assumptions. Jerome says (see Hug, p. 323, Norton, i. 199) that he obtained a copy of the Ebionite Gospel, and *translated it into Greek*; that some called it the Gospel "according *to the Apostles*," some "according to Matthew;" it could scarcely, therefore, have been *the same* as our Greek Gospel, or Jerome would not have thought it necessary to translate it again;—the discrepancies between the two are a question of degree, about which we have no adequate materials for judging;—and to assume, as Norton does, that in these discrepancies, the Greek Gospel is right, and the Hebrew wrong, is gratuitous, to say the least. If our Gospel is clearly an original, and not a translation, the question is of course set at rest: it is not the Gospel of Matthew; or if it is, the general tradition of the early Church that Matthew wrote in Hebrew (*which tradition is our only reason for supposing that Matthew wrote at all*) is erroneous. If it be a translation, we are still in ignorance when it was translated, by whom, and with what degree of fidelity.

Let us sum up briefly what is known on this subject, for it is an important one.

I. The general tradition of the Church as given by Irenæus, Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Chrysostom (from 178-398 A.D.), relates that Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jewish Christians. The origin of this tradition appears to be solely the assertion of Papias (A.D. 116), whose works are lost, but whose statement to this effect is preserved by Eusebius (A.D. 315), and who is supposed to have had this piece of information, as he affirms that he had others, from John, an elder of the Church of Ephesus.

II. *A* Hebrew Gospel, called sometimes the "Gospel of the Hebrews," sometimes the "Gospel according to the Apostles," sometimes the "Gospel according to Matthew," was preserved by the Jewish Christians, or Ebionites, and was by them maintained to be the only true Gospel.

III. If therefore this Gospel agreed with our Greek Gospel, or was now extant so that we could ascertain that the discrepancies were neither numerous nor material, there would be very strong external testimony for believing our Greek Gospel to have been a translation (and a sufficiently fair and faithful one) from Matthew's Hebrew work.

IV. But these Ebionites, or Jewish Christians, were held by the early Church to be heretics, and their Gospel to be uncanonical (Norton, i. 199). Would this have been the case had it really been the same as our first Gospel?

V. Again, Jerome (about A.D. 392) obtained a copy of this Hebrew Gospel, and translated it into both Greek and Latin. He was therefore competent to judge, but he nowhere affirms it to have been the same as our first Gospel, but describes it as "secundum apostolos, sive, *ut plerique autumant*, juxta Matthæum."—Hug (322) says, "It would appear from the fragments which

negative the supposition of the latter being a translation from it.

The only external testimony, then, which exists to show that Matthew the apostle wrote a gospel, shows at the same time that our first gospel is not the one which Matthew wrote. External evidence, therefore, gives us no reason to believe that it was the production of an eye-witness; and it is worthy of remark that the author nowhere names himself, nor claims the authority of an eye-witness. Internal evidence goes further, and we think effectually negatives the notion.

1. In the first place, many events are recorded at which we know from the record that Matthew was not present—some, indeed, at which none of the disciples were present; and yet all these are narrated in the same tone, and with the same particularity as the other portions of the narrative—sometimes even with more minute circumstantiality. Such are the Incarnation (c. i.), the story of the Magi (ii.), the Temptation (iv.), the Transfiguration (xvii.), the Agony and the prayer in Gethsemane (xxvi.), the denial of Peter (xxvi.),

yet exist in Jerome, that it was neither very like, nor very unlike, our first Gospel." . . . . "In the remotest period in which the existence of the Jewish Gospel is capable of being proved, it appears to have been so different from our Matthew, as to afford no ground for supposing the original identity of the two writings. The evidences of its existence in Origen and Clement are as many proofs of its dissimilarity to our first Gospel."—Norton, on the other hand (i. 203), thinks these differences no more than are perfectly compatible with original identity.

VI. Moreover, we have no account of the Gospel having been translated at all, nor when, nor by whom; and many of the most learned critics have decided that it is *no translation*, but an original.

The differences of opinion are wide enough to show how small is our actual knowledge in the matter. Some, as Hug, consider our Greek Gospel to be by Matthew, to be quite different from the Hebrew Gospel, and to have been originally written in Greek. Others, as Norton, believe our Gospel to be by Matthew, to be the same as the Hebrew Gospel, and to have been originally written in Hebrew, and faithfully translated. Others again, as several German critics, to whose opinion we incline, believe it not to be by Matthew, but by some subsequent compiler, and to have been originally written in Greek: the original Gospel of Matthew, if any such existed, being the one possessed by the Ebionites, and excluded by the orthodox as uncanonical.

It appears pretty certain (see Hug. 341) that if the Ebionite or Nazarene Gospel was *not* the original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, no such original Hebrew Gospel existed. From this Hug argues that Matthew did *not* write in Hebrew;—Norton, that this Ebionite Gospel *was* the original Hebrew of Matthew.

[Schleiermacher (Norton, i. 76) holds that *our* Gospels are not those spoken of by Papias, as proceeding from Matthew and Mark.]

the dream of Pilate's wife (xxvii.), the conversation between Judas and the Priests, and that between Pilate and the Priests (xxvii.), and, finally, that between the Priests and the Soldiers about the missing body of Jesus (xxviii.).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if the writer was not present at the colloquy of Pilate with the Chief Priests about the security of the grave of Jesus, neither was he present at the feeding of the five thousand, or the calming of the waves.

2. Secondly, the abruptness of the transitions, the fragmentary style of the narrative, and the entire absence of all those details as to the mode and object of the frequent journeys indicated[1], which we should expect from a companion, and which we find in Luke's account of Paul's travels—all point to the conclusion that the writer was a compiler, not an eye-witness.

3. The same conclusion is drawn from the circumstance that his frequent double narratives of the same events indicate the confusion of a man who was compiling from fragmentary materials, rather than the fulness and clearness of personal recollection[2]. De Wette and Credner dwell much upon this argument.

4. If, as the great majority of critics imagine, Mark and Luke had Matthew's Gospel before them when they wrote their own, it is certain that *they* could not have regarded him as either an eye-witness or a very accurate authority, as they do not hesitate both to retrench, to deviate from, and to contradict him. Moreover, the proem to Luke's Gospel must, we think, by all unbiassed minds be regarded as fatal to the hypothesis of the authors of any of the gospels then in existence having been either disciples or eye-witnesses. It is clear from that, that although many histories of Christ were then extant, none of them had any peculiar or paramount authority.

5. The author of the first gospel scarcely appears to have been acquainted with any portion of Christ's Ministry, except that of which Galilee was the scene.

The second gospel, like the first, bears no author's name;

[1] Hennell, p. 121.

[2] *Ex. gr.*, the cure of the blind men—the feedings—the demand of a sign—the accusation regarding Beelzebub.

but by Papias, and Irenæus[1], and (following them) by the universal tradition of the Church, is attributed to Mark, a friend and fellow-traveller of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, who is several times mentioned in the New Testament.[2] Papias says expressly that he was neither a hearer nor a follower of Christ, but compiled his gospel from information obtained from Peter, whose "interpreter"[3] he is said to have been. Papias gives "the Presbyter John," supposed to have been an elder of the Ephesian Church, as his authority. Mark, then, it is certain, was not an eye-witness.

[1] Papias, our earliest source of information on the matter, was Bishop of Hieropolis, and must have been intimate with many contemporaries of the Apostles, and perhaps had conversed with the Apostle John. His works are now lost, with the exception of a few fragments preserved by Eusebius. "Nothing (says Dr. Middleton) more effectually demonstrates the uncertainty of all tradition, than what is delivered to us by antiquity concerning this very Papias. Irenæus declares him to have been the companion of Polycarp, and the disciple of St. John the Apostle. But Eusebius tells us that he was not a disciple of St. John the Apostle, but of John the Presbyter, who was a companion only of the Apostle, but whom Irenæus mistook for the Apostle. Now from Papias, through Irenæus, came most of the early traditions, some of them relating to the millennium of the most monstrous character, which Irenæus does not scruple to ascribe to our Saviour, and which fully dispose us to credit the account of Eusebius, who says, "Papias was a weak man, of very shallow understanding, as appears from his writings; and by mistaking the meaning of the Apostles, imposed these silly traditions upon Irenæus and the greatest part of the ecclesiastical writers who, reflecting on the age of the man, and his near approach to the Apostles, were drawn by him into the same opinions." In another passage, indeed, Eusebius speaks of Papias in a much more respectful manner, as remarkable for eloquence and scriptural knowledge; but this passage is not found in the older copies, and is supposed to be spurious. It is obvious, therefore, that little reliance can be placed on any traditions which are traced to Papias. Irenæus, our next earliest authority, derives weight from his antiquity alone. His extreme childishness goes far to discredit many of his statements, and no reliance can be placed upon such of them as are at variance with the conclusions of critical science. His traditions of what John had related to the elders regarding the millennium are worse than anything in the Koran, *yet he gives them as "testified by Papias."* The following passage will induce us to receive with great caution any evidence he gives regarding the origin and authenticity of the Gospels:—"As there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four chief winds, and the Church is spread over all the earth, but the pillar and support of the Church is the Gospel and its breath of life, *plainly the Church must have four columns*, and from these must come forth four blasts," &c., &c.—*Ad. Hæres.* c. iii. It would be melancholy to reflect that through such sources our only surviving testimony on these matters is derived, had these matters the supreme importance usually ascribed to them.

[2] Acts xii. 12, 25; xiii. 5, 13; xv. 37. Col. iv. 10. Phil. 24. 1 Peter v. 13.

[3] What this could mean, as applied to a man who "spoke with tongues," it is for the Church to explain.

Nor have we any reason, beyond the similarity of name, to believe that the writer of the second Gospel was the same Mark who is mentioned in the Acts as the companion of Paul and Barnabas (*not* of Peter, by the way), nor the same who is mentioned in 1 Peter v. 13, as his son. Mark was one of the commonest of Roman names; and it is probable that the idea of the identity of the *three* Marks was an imagination of Papias merely[1].

Neither was the author of the third Gospel an eye-witness. His proem merely claims to set forth faithfully that which he had heard from eye-witnesses. Irenæus is the first person who distinctly mentions Luke as the author of this gospel; but little doubt appears to exist that he wrote both the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and was the companion of Paul in many of his voyages. He is mentioned Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon, 24; and is supposed to be the same as Silas.

The authorship of the fourth Gospel has been the subject of much learned and anxious controversy among Theologians, and opinions are so equally divided as almost to preclude our coming to any fixed conclusion. The earliest, and only very important, external testimony we have is that of Irenæus (A.D. 178), who says, that after Luke wrote, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, likewise published a gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." The last chapter of the gospel contains an attestation of its having been written by John (verse 24); but as this attestation obviously does not proceed from John himself[2], and as we do not know from whom it does proceed, its authority can have little weight. It is generally allowed, and indeed seems pretty evident, that the gospel and the first epistle proceed from the same pen; but if the second and third epistles are genuine[3], it is very questionable

[1] Credner, indeed, decides, but we think on very insufficient grounds, that our Gospel in its present form cannot be that of Mark. He notices the opposite accounts given by Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus, the former of whom says that it was written after the death of Peter, and the latter that it was submitted to him for his approval. This statement, however, is evidently one of those improvements upon fact which the fathers never scrupled to indulge in.—Credner, Einl. § 56.

[2] De Wette doubts the genuineness of the whole chapter, and internal evidence is certainly against it.

[3] Their genuineness, however, is doubted both by Eusebius and Origen.—See De Wette, i. § 23, 24.

whether this pen was that of John *the Apostle;* for, though in the first chapter of the first epistle, the writer declares himself to have been personally acquainted with Jesus, yet in the second and third epistles he calls himself "the Elder." Now there was a John at Ephesus (from whom Papias derived all his information, and who, he says, was also a disciple of Jesus), to whom the title of "Elder" (πρεσβυτερος) was gived, *to distinguish him from the Apostle John.*

The balancing of the internal evidence for and against the supposition that the Apostle John was the author of the Gospel, is a matter of extreme difficulty. The reasons adduced in behalf of each opinion are very strong. Hug entertains no doubt that the decision should be in the affirmative;—Bretschneider almost proves the negative;—De Wette finds it impossible to decide;—while Strauss, who in his earlier editions had expressed himself satisfied that the gospel was not genuine, writes thus in the preface to the third edition: "With De Wette and Neander in my hand, I have recommenced the examination of the fourth Gospel, and this renewed investigation has shaken the doubts I had conceived against its authenticity and credibility;—not that I am convinced that it is authentic, but neither am I convinced that it is not." Where such men doubt, assuredly it is not for us to dogmatize.

One argument against the supposition of John having been the author of the fourth Gospel has impressed my mind very forcibly. It is this: that several of the most remarkable events recorded by the other evangelists, at which we are told by them that only *Peter, James and John were present,* and of which, therefore, John alone of all the evangelists could have spoken with the distinctness and authority of an eye-witness, are entirely omitted—we may say, *ignored* —by him. Such are the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, the agony in Gethsemane. Now, on the assumption that John was the author of the fourth Gospel, —either he had *not* seen the works of the other evangelists, in which case he would certainly not have omitted to record narratives of such interest and beauty, especially that of the transfiguration;—or he *had* seen them, and omitted all notice of them because he could not confirm the statements; for we cannot imagine that he did not record them in con-

sequence of finding them already recorded, and seeing nothing to alter in the relation;—as an eye-witness, he would certainly, had they been true, have given them at least a passing word of confirmation, and we find that he does, on more than one occasion, relate events of less moment already recorded in the other gospels, as the feedings of the five thousand, the anointing of Jesus's feet, &c. But *all the events said to have been witnessed by John alone, are omitted by John alone!* This fact is fatal either to the reality of the events in question, or to the genuineness of the fourth Gospel. Thus much, however, seems certain, and admitted;—that, if the Gospel in question were the genuine composition of the Apostle John, it must have been written when he was at least ninety years of age—when his recollections of events and conversations which had passed sixty years before had become faint and fluctuating—when ill-digested Grecian learning had overlaid the simplicity of his fisherman's character, and his Judaic education—and the scenes and associations of Ionia had overpowered and obscured the recollections of Palestine[1]. It therefore becomes, as we shall see hereafter, an inquiry of only secondary moment.

Of the first three (or, as they are commonly termed, the Synoptical) Gospels, we *know* that two, and we *believe* that all three, were not the productions of eye-witnesses. The question then arises, in what manner, and from what materials, were they composed? This subject has for a long period exercised the minds of the most acute and learned divines of Germany, as Eichorn, Credner, Bretschneider, De Wette, Hug, Schleiermacher, and Strauss; and the results of their investigations may be thus briefly summed up.

The numerous and irreconcilable discrepancies observable in the three Evangelists preclude the supposition of their having all drawn their information from one and the same source—while the still more remarkable points of similarity and agreement, often extending to the most minute verbal peculiarities, entirely forbid the idea of their having derived

[1] In this case, also, as in that of Matthew, we may remark that the evangelist relates events long past, and at which he was not present, as minutely and dramatically as if they had occurred yesterday and in his presence.

their materials from independent, and therefore mutually confirmatory sources[1].

Three different hypotheses have been formed by competent judges to account for these marked characteristics of the three first Evangelists. Eichorn (and, following him, Dr. Marsh), adopted the idea of an original document, now lost, written in the Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic language (the Aramaic Gospel, as it is called by some), from which all three Evangelists copied their accounts, with additions and omissions peculiar to themselves. With many divines this hypothesis is still the favourite one;—but, in addition to the difficulty arising from the fact that we can nowhere find any allusion to the existence of such a document, more minute criticism discovered so many peculiarities inexplicable on this theory that its credit was much shaken, and its principal supporter, Eichorn, was driven, in order to maintain it, to admit modifications which have made it almost unintelligible[2]. The hypothesis appears to us to have been since completely demolished by the reasonings of Hug, Thirlwall, and Schleiermacher[3]. An ingenious modification of this theory by Giesler, *who substitutes an oral for a written original,* is explained and controverted by Dr. Thirlwall, in the admirable treatise we have already quoted (p. cxvi.). The proem to Luke's Gospel, moreover, tacitly, but effectually, negatives the supposition that *he* was acquainted with any such original and paramountly authoritative document.

The second hypothesis is the prevalent one—that one of

[1] "Those who, to explain the harmony which we observe in these works, refer us simply to the identity of the subject, and, for the cause of their discrepancies, to the peculiarities of the writers, instead of offering a solution of the problem, only betray either their inattention to the phenomena which constitute it, or their incapacity to comprehend its nature. Three accounts of the same series of transactions, delivered by independent eye-witnesses, could never, through whatever hands they might pass, naturally and without intentional assimilation, assume the shape exhibited by the common sections of the three first evangelists."—Thirlwall, Introd. to Schleiermacher, cxxii.

[2] He ended by imagining *four* different editions or copies, in different languages, and with many variations, of this original gospel.

[3] "For my part (says this latter) I find it quite enough to prevent me from conceiving the origin of the gospel according to Eichorn's theory, that I am to figure to myself our good evangelists surrounded by five or six open rolls or books, and that too in different languages, looking by turns from one into another, and writing a compilation from them. I fancy myself in a German study of the 19th century, rather than in the primitive age of Christianity."—Schleiermacher, Crit. Essay on Luke, Intr. p. 6.

the Evangelists wrote first, and that the others copied him, with alterations, additions, and omissions, dictated by their own judgment or by extraneous sources of information. Matthew is generally considered to have been the earliest writer; but critics differ in the relative order they assign to Mark and Luke—some, as Mill, Hug, and Wetstein, conceiving that Luke copied both from Mark and Matthew; and others, as De Wette and Griesbach, arguing that Mark was the latest in order of time, and made use of both his predecessors. Mr. Kenrick, in a masterly analysis (*Prosp. Rev.* xxi.), has, however, we think, succeeded in making it perfectly clear that Mark's Gospel was both first in order of time, and in fidelity of narration.

This theory has been much and minutely examined, and to our minds it appears unsatisfactory. It accounts for the agreements, but not for the discrepancies, of the gospels; and Dr. Thirlwall, in his translation of Schleiermacher, has succeeded in showing that it is highly improbable, if not wholly inadmissible[1].

The third hypothesis, which was first propounded by Lessing, and has since been revived and elaborated by Schleiermacher (one of the highest theological authorities of Germany), seems to us to have both critical evidence and *à priori* likelihood in its favour. These writers presume the existence *of a number of fragmentary narratives*, some oral, some written, of the actions and sayings of Christ, such as would naturally be preserved and transmitted by persons who had witnessed those wonderful words and deeds. Sometimes there would be two or more narratives of the same event, proceeding from different witnessses; sometimes the same original narrative in its transmission would receive intentional or accidental variations, and thus come slightly modified into the hands of different evangelists. Sometimes detached sayings would be preserved without the context, and the evangelists would *locate* them where they thought them most appropriate, or provide a context for them, in-

[1] Those who wish to obtain a general knowledge of this interesting controversy, should peruse the admirable summary of it given by Bishop Thirlwall in his introduction to Schleiermacher. We have purposely avoided entering into the *argument*, for it would be unfair to copy, and impossible to abridge or amend, his lucid statement.

stances of which are numberless in the gospels[1]. But all these materials would be fragmentary. Each witness would retain and transmit that portion of a discourse which had impressed him most forcibly, and two witnesses would retain the same expressions with varying degrees of accuracy[2]. One witness heard one discourse, or was present at one transaction only, and recorded that one by writing or verbally, as he best might. Of these fragments some fell into the hands of all the Evangelists—some only into the hands of one, or of two[3]: and in some cases different narratives of the same event, expression, or discourse, would fall into the hands of different evangelists, which would account for their discrepancies—sometimes into the hands of one Evangelist, in which case he would select that one which his judgment (or information from other sources) prompted, or would compile an account from them jointly. In any case, the evangelical narratives would be *compilations from a series of fragments of varying accuracy and completeness*. The correctness of this theory of the origin of the gospels seems to be not so much confirmed as distinctly *asserted* by Luke. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things *which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word*."

"The first step (says Schleiermacher)[4] towards a Christian History was a natural and reasonable desire on the part of those who had believed on Jesus, without having a knowledge of his person. These individuals would undoubtedly be glad to learn some particulars of his life, in order to place themselves as nearly as possible on an equality with their

[1] "The verbal agreement is generally greater in reports of the discourses of Christ than in relations of events; and the speeches of other persons are often given in the same terms, though the circumstances which led to them are differently described."—Thirlwall, cxvi.

[2] The habit of retaining and transmitting discourses orally was much more common then than now, and the practice carried to great perfection. The learning of the Jews was transmitted exclusively by oral tradition from one generation to another, and we entertain little doubt that the fragments both of narratives and discourses which formed the materials of our evangelists were almost entirely oral.—(See Thirlwall, cxviii. Norton, i. 287.)

[3] Thus the materials of the first three Evangelists were evidently collected chiefly in Galilee; those of the fourth came principally from Judea.

[4] Crit. Essay on Luke, Introd. 12–14.

elder and more fortunate brethren. In the public assemblies of the Christians this desire was of course only incidentally and sparingly gratified, when a teacher happened to refer to memorable sayings of Christ, which could only be related together with the occasion which had called them forth: more copious and detailed accounts they could only procure in familiar intercourse upon express inquiry. And in this way many particulars were told and heard, most of them, probably, without being committed to writing; but, assuredly, much was very soon written down, partly by the narrators themselves, as each of them happened to be pressed by a multiplicity of questions on a particular occurrence, respecting which he was peculiarly qualified to give information. Still more, however, must have been committed to writing by the inquirers, especially by such as did not remain constantly in the neighbourhood of the narrators, and were glad to communicate the narrative again to many others, who, perhaps, were never able to consult an eye-witness. In this way detached incidents and discourses were noted down. Notes of this kind were at first no doubt less frequently met with among the Christians settled in Palestine, and passed immediately into more distant parts, to which the pure oral tradition flowed more scantily. They, however, appeared everywhere more frequently, and were more anxiously sought for, when the great body of the original companions and friends of Christ was dispersed by persecutions, and still more when that first generation began to die away. It would, however, have been singular if, even before this, the inquirers who took those notes had possessed only detached passages; on the contrary, they, and still more their immediate copiers, had undoubtedly become collectors also, each according to his peculiar turn of mind; and thus one, perhaps, collected only accounts of miracles; another only discourses; a third, perhaps, attached exclusive importance to the last days of Christ, or even to the scenes of his resurrection. Others, without any such particular predilection, collected all that fell in their way from good authority."

The work from which the above is a quotation, is a masterly analysis of Luke's gospel, with a view to test the correctness of the author's hypothesis as to the origin of the

evangelical histories; and the success is, we think, complete. His conclusion is as follows (p. 313):—

"The main position is firmly established, that Luke is neither an independent writer, nor has made a compilation from works which extended over the whole course of the life of Jesus. He is from beginning to end no more than the compiler and arranger of documents, which he found in existence, and which he allows to pass unaltered through his hands. His merit in this capacity is twofold—that of arrangement and of judicious selection."

The theory of Norton[1], as to the origin of the Gospels, does not materially differ from the one we have adopted from Schleiermacher, with this exception—that he, as we think gratuitously, assumes the oral narratives, which formed the foundation or materials of the evangelical histories, to have proceeded from the Apostles exclusively. However, this may have been the case; and then the unconscious sources of error will be confined to such accretions and lapses of memory as might be natural in the course of thirty years' narration, and to such discrepancies as would be inevitable among twelve men.

[1] Genuineness of the Gospels, i. 284–390—a work full of learning resolutely applied to the establishment of a foregone conclusion.

CHAPTER VII.

FIDELITY OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.—NATURE AND LIMITS.

HAVING in our last chapter arrived at the conclusion that the Gospels—(the three first, at least, for with regard to the fourth we can pronounce no confident opinion)—are compilations from a variety of fragmentary narratives, and reports of discourses and conversations, oral or written, which were current in Palestine from thirty to forty years after the death of Jesus—we now come to the very interesting and momentous inquiry, how far these narratives and discourses can be accepted as accurate and faithful records of what was actually said and done?—whether they can be regarded as thoroughly and minutely correct?—and, if not, in what respects and to what extent do they deviate from that thorough and minute correctness?

It is clear at first view that the same absolute reliance cannot be placed upon a narrative compounded from traditionary fragments, as upon a consecutive history related by an eye-witness. Conceding to *both* faithful intention and good, though imperfect, powers of memory, there are obvious elements of inaccuracy in the one case which do not appertain to the other. To the corruptions, lapses, and alterations inseparable from transmission, especially when oral, is added the uncertainty arising from the *number* of the original sources of the tradition, whose character, capacity, and opportunities of knowledge, are unknown to us. If Luke had recorded only what he had seen, or Mark only what he had heard from Peter, we should have comparatively ample means of forming a decision as to the amount of reliance to be placed upon their narrations; but when they record

what they learned from perhaps a dozen different narrators—some original, others only second-hand, and all wholly unknown—it becomes obvious that causes of inaccuracy are introduced, the extent of the actual operation of which on the histories that have come down to us, it is both extremely important and singularly difficult to estimate.

This inquiry we consider as of paramount interest to every other question of criticism; for on the conclusion to which it leads us depends the whole—not of Christianity, which, as we view it, is unassailable, but—of *textual* or *dogmatic Christianity;* i.e. the Christianity of nine-tenths of nominal Christendom. We proceed, therefore, to ask what evidence we possess for assuming or impugning the minute fidelity of the Gospel history.

There are certain portions of the Synoptical Gospels, the genuiness of which has been much disputed, viz. the two first chapters of Matthew—the two first of Luke—and the last twelve verses of the xvith chapter of Mark[1]. Into this discussion we cannot enter, but must refer such of our readers as wish to know the *grounds* of decision, to Norton, Hug, De Wette, Eichorn, and Griesbach. The *result* of critical inquiry seems to be, that the only solid ground for supposing the questioned portions of Luke and Matthew not to be by the same hand as the rest of their respective gospels, is the obviously insufficient one of the extraordinary character of their contents[2];—while the spuriousness of the last twelve verses of Mark is established beyond question;—the real Gospel of Mark (all of it, at least, that has come down to us) ends with the 8th verse of the xvith chapter. In our subsequent remarks we shall therefore treat the whole of the acknowledged text of these gospels as genuine, with the exception of the conclusion of Mark;—and we now proceed to inquire into the nature and limits of the fidelity of Matthew's record.

In the first place, while admitting to the fullest extent the general clearness and fulness with which the character of Jesus is depicted in the first Gospel, it is important to

[1] See Norton, i. 16, 17.

[2] Strauss, i. 117, 142. Hug, 469–479. See also Schleiermacher. Norton, however, gives some reasons to the contrary, which deserve consideration, i. 209.

bear in mind, that—as Hug has clearly shown[1]—it was written with a special, we might almost say a polemical, object. It was composed, less to give a continuous and complete history of Jesus, than to prove that he was the expected Messiah; and those passages were therefore selected out of the author's materials which appeared most strongly to bear upon and enforce this conclusion. The remembrance of this *object* of Matthew's will aid us in forming our judgment as to his fidelity.

According to the universal expectation, the Messiah was to be born of the seed of Abraham, and the lineage and tribe of David. Accordingly, the Gospel opens with an elaborate genealogy of Jesus, tracing him through David to Abraham. Now, in the *first* place, this genealogy is not correct:—*secondly*, if the remainder of the chapter is to be received as true, it is in no sense the genealogy of Jesus; and, *thirdly*, it is wholly and irreconcilably at variance with that given by Luke.

1. In verse 17, Matthew sums up the genealogy thus:—"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon until Christ are fourteen generations."—Now (passing over as unnecessarily minute and harsh the criticism of Strauss, that by no way of counting can we make out fourteen generations in the last series, without disturbing the count of the others), we must call attention to the fact that the number fourteen in the second series *is only obtained by the deliberate omission of four generations*, viz. three between Joram and Ozias, and one between Josiah and Jeconiah—as may be seen by referring to 1 Chron. iii. There is also (at verse 4–6) another apparent, and we think, certain, error. Only four generations are reckoned between Naason, who lived in the time of Moses,

[1] "All Matthew's reflections are of one kind. He shows us, as to everything that Jesus did and taught, that it was characteristic of the Messiah. On occasion of remarkable events, or a recital of parts of the discourses of Jesus, he refers us to the ancient Scriptures of the Jews in which this coming Saviour is delineated, and shows in detail that the great ideal which flitted before the minds of the Prophets, was realized in Jesus."—Hug. Introd. 312. These references are twelve in Matthew, two in Mark, and three in Luke. Again, he says (p. 384), "Matthew is an historical deduction; Mark is history."

and David, a period of four hundred years. (Compare Numbers i. 7, Ruth v. 20).

2. The genealogy here given, correct or incorrect, is the genealogy of *Joseph*, who was in no sense whatever the father (or any relation at all) of Jesus, since this last, we are assured (verses 18 and 25), was in his Mother's womb before she and her husband came together. The story of the Incarnation and the genealogy are obviously at variance; and no ingenuity, unscrupulously as it has been applied, can produce even the shadow of an agreement;—and when the flat contradiction given to each other by the 1st and the 18th verses are considered, it is difficult for an unprejudiced mind not to feel convinced that the author of the genealogy (both in the first and third Gospels) was ignorant of the story of the Incarnation, though the carelessness and uncritical temper of the evangelist—a carelessness partially avoided, in the cases of Luke, by an interpolation[1]—has united the two into one compilation.

3. The genealogy of Jesus given by Luke is wholly different from that of Matthew; and the most desperate efforts of divines have been unable to effect even the semblance of a reconciliation. Not only does Matthew give 26 generations between David and Joseph where Luke has 41, but they trace the descent through an entirely different line of ancestry. According to Matthew, the father of Joseph was named Jacob—according to Luke, Heli. In Matthew, the son of David through whom Joseph descended is Solomon;—in Luke it is Nathan. Thence the genealogy of Matthew descends through the known royal line—the genealogy of Luke through an obscure collateral branch. The two lines only join in Salathiel and Zorobabel; and even here they differ as to the father of Salathiel and the son of Zorobabel. Many ingenious hypotheses have been broached to explain and harmonize these singular discrepancies, but wholly in vain. One critic supposes that one evangelist gives the pedigree of the adoptive, the other of the real father of Joseph. Another assumes that one is the genealogy of Joseph, and the other that of Mary—a most convenient idea,

[1] Luke iii. 23, "Jesus . . . . being, *as was supposed* (ὡς ἐνομίζετο), the son of Joseph,"—a parenthesis, which renders nugatory the whole of the following genealogy, and cannot have originally formed a part of it.—The 16th verse of Matthew also bears indications of a similar emendation.

but entirely gratuitous, and positively contradicted by the language of the text. The circumstance that any man could suppose that Matthew, when he said "Jacob begat Joseph," or Luke, when he said "Joseph was the son of Heli," could refer to the wife of the one, or the daughter-in-law of the other, shows to what desperate stratagems polemical orthodoxy will resort in order to defend an untenable position.

The discrepancy between Matthew and Luke in their narratives of the miraculous conception, affords no ground for suspecting the fidelity of the former. Putting aside the extraordinary nature of the whole transaction—a consideration which does not at present concern us—the relation in Matthew is simple, natural, and probable; the surprise of Joseph at the pregnancy of his wife (or his *betrothed*, as the word may mean); his anxiety to avoid scandal and exposure; his satisfaction through the means of a dream (for among the Jews dreams were habitually regarded as means of communication from heaven); and his absence from all conjugal connection with Mary till after the birth of the miraculous infant,—present precisely the line of conduct we should expect from a simple, pious, and confiding Jew.

But when we remember the dogmatic object which, as already mentioned, Matthew had in view, and in connection with that remembrance read the 22nd and 23rd verses, the whole story at once becomes apocryphal, and its origin at once clear. "All these things were done," says Matthew, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son," &c., &c. Now this is one of the many instances which we shall have to notice, in which this evangelist quotes prophecies as intended for Jesus, and as fulfilled in him, which have not the slightest relation to him or his career. The adduced prophecy[1] is simply an

[1] "Therefore the Lord spake unto Ahaz, saying, ... Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . . Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings."—Isaiah vii. 10–16.

"And I went unto the Prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord unto me . . . . before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria."—viii. 3, 4.

No divine of character will now, we believe, maintain that this prophecy had any reference to Jesus; nor ever would have imagined it to have, without Matthew's intimation.—See Hebrew Monarchy, p. 262.

assurance sent to the unbelieving Ahaz, that before the child, which the wife of Isaiah would shortly conceive (see Is. viii. 2–4), was old enough to speak, or to know good from evil, the conspiracy of Syria and Ephraim against the King of Judæa should be dissolved; and had manifestly no more reference to Jesus than to Napoleon. The conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable, that the events said to have occurred in fulfilment of a prophecy, which Matthew *wrongly* supposed to have reference to them, were by him imagined, or modified into accordance with the supposed prophecy; since it is certain that they did *not*, as he affirms, take place, "in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled."

Pursuing this line of inquiry, we shall find many instances in which this tendency of Matthew to find in Jesus the fulfilment of prophecies, which he *erroneously* conceived to refer to him, has led him to narrate circumstances respecting which the other evangelists are silent, as well as to give, with material (but *intentional*) variations, relations which are common to them all—a peculiarity which throws great suspicion over several passages. Thus in ii. 13–15, we are told that immediately after the visit of the Magi, Joseph took Mary and the child, and fled into Egypt, remaining there till the death of Herod, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." The passage in question occurs in Hosea, xi. 1, and has not the slightest reference to Christ. It is as follows:—"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt." Here is an event related, very improbable in itself, flatly contradicted by Luke's history[1] and which occurred, we are told, that a prophecy might be fulfilled to which it had no reference, of which it was no fulfilment, and which, in fact, was no prophecy at all.

A similar instance occurs immediately afterwards in the same chapter. We are told that Herod, when he found "that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old

[1] Luke's account entirely precludes the sojourn in Egypt. He says that *eight* days after the birth of Jesus he was circumcised, *forty* days after was presented in the Temple, and that when these legal ceremonies were accomplished, he went with his parents to Nazareth.

and under;"—an act which is not suitable to the known character of Herod, who was cruel and tyrannical, but at the same time crafty and politic, not silly nor insane[1]—which, if it had occurred, must have created a prodigious sensation, and made one of the most prominent points in Herod's history[2]—yet of which none of the other evangelists, nor any historian of the day, nor Josephus (though he devoted a considerable portion of his history to the reign of Herod, and does not spare his reputation), makes any mention. But this also, according to Matthew's notion, was the fulfilment of a prophecy. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."—Here, again, the adduced prophecy was quite irrelevant, being simply a description of the grief of Judæa for the captivity of her children, accompanied by a promise of their return.[3]

A still more unfortunate instance is found at the 23rd verse, where we are told that Joseph abandoned his intention of returning into Judæa, and turned aside into Galilee, and came and dwelt at Nazareth, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."—Now, in the first place, the name Nazarene was not in use till long afterwards;—secondly, there is no such prophecy in the Old Testament. The evangelist, perhaps, had in his mind the words that were spoken to the mother of Sampson (Judges xiii. 5) respecting her son: "The child shall be a Nazarite (i. e. one bound by a vow,

[1] Neander argues very ably that such a deed is precisely what we should expect from Herod's character. But Sir W. Jones gives reason for believing that the whole story may be of *Hindoo origin*.—Christian Theism, p. 84, where the passage is quoted.

[2] Mr. Milman (Hist. Jews, b. xii.), however, thinks differently, and argues that, among Herod's manifold barbarities, "the murder of a few children in an obscure village" would easily escape notice. The story is at least highly improbable, for had Herod wished to secure the death of Jesus, so cunning a Prince would have sent his messengers along with the Magi, not awaited their doubtful return.

[3] The passage is as follows:—"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."—Jeremiah xxxi. 15, 16.

whose hair was forbidden to be cut, which never was the case with Jesus[1]) to God from the womb."

In this place we must notice the marked discrepancy between Matthew and Luke, as to the original residence of the parents of Jesus. Luke speaks of them as living at Nazareth *before* the birth of Jesus: Matthew as having left their former residence, Bethlehem, to go to Nazareth, only after that event, and from peculiar considerations. Critics, however, are disposed to think Matthew right on this occasion.

There are, however, several passages in different parts of the Evangelists which suggest serious doubts as to whether Jesus were really born at Bethlehem, and were really a lineal descendant of David, and whether both these statements were not unfounded inventions of his followers to prove his title to the Messiahship. In the first place the Jews are frequently represented as urging that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because he was *not* born at Bethlehem; and neither Jesus nor his followers ever set them right upon this point. If he were really born at Bethlehem, the circumstance was generally unknown, and though its being unknown presented an obvious and valid objection to the admission of his claim to the Messianic character, no effort was made either by Christ or his disciples to remove this objection, which might have been done by a single word. (John vii. 41–43, 52; i. 46.) "Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the People because of him."—Again, the Pharisees object to Nicodemus, when arguing on Jesus' behalf—"Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet."

The three Synoptical evangelists (Matth. xxii. 41; Mark xii. 35; Luke xx. 41) all record an argument of Christ addressed to the Pharisees, the purport of which is to show that the Messiah need not be, and could not be, the Son of David. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He

[1] See Numbers vi. 2–6.

saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son?" Now, be the argument good or bad, is it conceivable that Jesus should have brought it forward if he were really a descendant of David? Must not the intention of it have been to argue that, though *not* a Son of David, he might still be the Christ?

In xxi. 2–4, 6–7, the entry into Jerusalem is thus described: "Then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, *and a colt with her:* loose them, and bring them to me. . . . . And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass *and the colt*, and put on *them* their clothes, and set him thereon" (literally "*upon them*," ἐπάνω αὐτῶν). Now, in the first place, we can see no reason why *two* animals should have been brought; secondly, the description (in ver. 16), representing Jesus as sitting upon *both* animals, is absurd; and, thirdly, Mark, Luke, and John, who all mention the same occurrence, agree in speaking of one animal only. But the liberty which Matthew has taken with both fact and probability is at once explained, when we read in the 4th verse; "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, *and a colt the foal of an ass*." [1]

As a final example, we may instance the treachery of Judas. The other evangelists simply narrate that Judas covenanted with the chief Priests to betray Jesus. Matthew, however, relates the conversation between the traitor and his fellow-conspirators as minutely as if he had been present, specifies the exact sum of money that was given, and the use to which it was put by the Priests (the purchase of the Potter's field), when returned to them by the repentant

[1] The quotation is from Zechariah ix. 9; the passage has reference to the writer's own time, and the second animal is obviously a mere common poetical reduplication, such as is met with in every page of Hebrew poetry. But Matthew thought a *literal* similitude essential. "And" ought to have been translated "even."

Judas[1]. Here, as usual, the discrepancy between Matthew and his fellow-evangelists is explained by a prophecy which Matthew conceived to apply to the case before him, and thought necessary therefore should be literally fulfilled; but which on examination appears to have had no allusion to any times but those in which it was uttered, and which, moreover, is not found in the prophet whom Matthew quotes from, but in another[2]. The passage as quoted by Matthew is as follows:—"And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." The original passage in Zechariah is given in a note.

To pass from this ground of want of confidence in Matthew's fidelity, we may specify two others:—*first*, we find several discrepancies between him and the other evangelists, in which there is reason to believe that he was wrong; and, *secondly*, we find words and parts of discourses put by him into Jesus' mouth, which there is ample reason to believe that Jesus never uttered.

I. The second chapter opens with an account (peculiar to Matthew) of the visit of the wise men of the East to Bethlehem, whither they were guided by a star which went before them, and stood over the house in which the infant Jesus lay. The general legendary character of the narrative—its similarity in style with those contained in the apocryphal gospels—and more especially its conformity with those astrological notions which, though prevalent in the time of Matthew, have been exploded by the sounder scientific knowledge of our days—all unite to stamp upon the story the impress of poetic or mythic fiction; and its

[1] Luke, however, in the Acts (i. 18), states that Judas himself purchased the field with the money he had received, and died accidentally therein. Matthew says he returned the money, and went and hanged himself.

[2] Matthew quotes Jeremiah, but the passage is contained in Zechariah xi. 12, 13. Some people, however, imagine that the latter chapters of Zechariah do really belong to Jeremiah. Others conceive the passage to be contained in some lost book of Jeremiah. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." The word "Potter" is a translation *made to accommodate* Matthew. The LXX. has "treasury" or "foundry," as it were our "mint."

admission into his history is not creditable to Matthew's judgment, though it may not impugn his fidelity; as it may have been among his materials, and he had no critical acumen which should lead him to reject it.

In Matth. viii. 28-34, we have an account of the healing of *two* demoniacs, whose disease (or whose devils, according to the evangelist) was communicated to an adjacent herd of swine. Now, putting aside the great improbability of two madmen, as fierce as these are described to be, living together, Mark and Luke[1], who both relate the same occurrence, state that there was *one* demoniac, obviously a much preferable version of the narrative.

In the same manner, in c. xx. 30–34, Matthew relates the cure of *two* blind men near Jericho. Mark and Luke[2] narrate the same occurrence, but speak of only *one* blind man. This story affords also an example of the evangelist's carelessness as a compiler, for (in c. ix. 27) he has already given the same narrative, but has assigned to it a different locality.

A still more remarkable instance of Matthew's tendency to amplification, or rather to multiplication and repetition, is found in xiv. 16, *et seq.*, and xv. 32, *et seq.*[3], where the two miraculous feedings of the multitude are described. The feeding of the five thousand is related by all four evangelists; but the repetition of the miracle, with a slight variation in the number of the multitude and of the loaves and fragments, is peculiar to Matthew, and to Mark[4]. Now, that both these narratives are merely varying accounts of the same event (the variation arising from the mode in which the materials of the gospel history were collected, as explained in our preceding chapter), and that only one feeding was originally recorded, is now admitted by all competent critics[5], and appears clearly from several considerations.

[1] Mark v. 1. Luke viii. 26. There are other discrepancies between the three narratives, both in this and the following case, but they are beside our present purpose.

[2] Mark x. 46. Luke xviii. 35.

[3] The parallel passages are, Mark vi. 35. Luke ix. 12. John vi. 5.

[4] See Mark viii. 1, et seq. The language of the two evangelists is here so precisely similar, as to leave no doubt that one copied the other, or both a common document. The word baskets is σόφινοι in the first case, and σπυρίδες in the second, in both evangelists.

[5] See also Schleiermacher, p. 144, who does not hesitate to express his full disbelief in the second feeding.

—*First*, Luke and John relate only one feeding; in the next place, the two narratives in Matthew are given with the same accompaniments, in a similar, probably in the very same, locality; *thirdly*, the particulars of the occurrence and the remarks of the parties, are almost identically the same on each occasion; and, finally (what is perfectly conclusive), in the second narration, the language and conduct both of Jesus and his disciples, show a perfect unconsciousness of any previous occurrence of the same nature. Is it credible, that if the disciples had, a few days before, witnessed the miraculous feeding of the "five thousand" with "five loaves and two fishes," they should on the second occasion, when they had "seven loaves and a few small fishes," have replied to the suggestion of Jesus that the fasting multitude should again be fed, "whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?" It is certain that the idea of two feedings having really taken place, could only have found acceptance in minds preoccupied with the doctrine of the plenary inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. It is now entirely abandoned by all divines except the English, and by the few thinkers even among them. A confirmatory argument, were any needed, might be drawn from observing that the narrative of the fourth evangelist agrees in some points with Matthew's first, and in some with his second account.

The story contained in xvii. 27, *et seq.*, of Jesus commanding Peter to catch a fish in whose mouth he should find the tribute money, has a most pagan and unworthy character about it, harmonizes admirably with the puerile narratives which abound in the apocryphal gospels, and is ignored by all the other evangelists.

In xxvii. 24, we find this narrative: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Now, in the first place, this symbolic action was a Jewish, not a Roman ceremony[1], and as such most unsuitable and improbable in a Roman governor, one

[1] It appears from Deut. xxi. 1–9, that the washing of the hands was a specially-appointed Mosaic rite, by which the authorities of any city in which murder had been committed were to avow their innocence of the crime, and ignorance of the criminal.

of a nation noted for their contempt of the habits and opinions of their subject nations. In the second place, it is inconceivable that Pilate should so emphatically have pronounced his own condemnation, by declaring Jesus to be a "just man," at the very moment when he was about to scourge him, and deliver him over to the most cruel tortures.

In Matthew's account of the last moments of Jesus, we have the following remarkable statements (xxvii. 50–53[1]):— "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Now, *first*, this extraordinary fact, if it be a fact, (and it is said to have been a public one—"they appeared unto *many*,") is ignored by the other evangelists; nor do we find any reference to it in the Acts or the Epistles, nor any reason to believe that any of the apostles were aware of the occurrence—one, certainly, to excite the deepest interest and wonder. *Secondly*, the statement is a confused, if not a self-contradictory, one. The assertion in ver. 52, clearly is, that the opening of the graves, and the rising of the bodies of saints, formed a portion of that series of convulsions of Nature which is said to have occurred at the moment when Jesus expired; whereas the following verse speaks of it as occurring "after his resurrection." To suppose, as believers in verbal accuracy do, and must do, that the bodies were re-animated on the Friday, and not allowed to come out of their graves till the Sunday, is clearly too monstrous to be seriously entertained. If, to avoid this difficulty, we adopt Griesbach's reading, and translate the passage thus: "And coming out of their graves, went into the holy city after his resurrection,"—the question still recurs, "Where did they remain between Friday and Sunday? And did they, after three days' emanci-

[1] Norton (i. 214) thinks this passage an interpolation, as he does many others, on the obviously unfair ground that the statement it contains is improbable. It may be improbable that it should have happened, yet not improbable that Matthew should have recorded it, if he found it among his traditional materials.

pation, resume their sepulchral habiliments, and return to their narrow prison-house, and their former state of dust?" Again, when we refer to the original, we find that it was *the bodies* (*σώματα*) which "arose;" but, if we suppose that the evangelist wrote grammatically, it could not have been the bodies which "came out of the graves," or he would have written *ἐξέλθοντα*, not *ἐξέλθοντες*. Whence Bush[1] assumes that the *bodies* arose (or were raised, *ἠγέρθη*) at the time of the crucifixion, but lay down again[2], and that it was the *souls* which came out of the graves after the resurrection of Christ and appeared unto many! We cannot, however, admit that souls inhabit graves.

There can, we think, remain little doubt in unprepossessed minds, that the whole legend (it is greatly augmented in the apocryphal gospels[3]) was one of those intended to magnify and honour Christ[4], which were current in great numbers at the time when Matthew wrote, and which he, with the usual want of discrimination and somewhat omnivorous tendency which distinguished him as a compiler, admitted into his gospel;—and that the confusing phrase, "after his resurrection," was added either by him, or by some previous transmitter, or later copier, to prevent the apparent want of deference and decorum involved in a resurrection which should have preceded that of Jesus.

In c. xxvii. 62-66, and xxviii. 11-15, we find a record of two conversations most minutely given—one between the Chief Priests and Pilate, and the other between the

[1] See a very elaborate work of Professor Bush, entitled "Anastasis, or the Resurrection of the Body" (p. 210), the object of which is to prove that the resurrection of the *body* is neither a rational nor a scriptural doctrine.

[2] The Professor's notion appears to be that the *rising of the bodies* on the Friday was a mere mechanical effect of the earthquake, and that re-animation did not take place till the Sunday, and that even then it was not the *bodies* which arose.

[3] The Gospel of the Hebrews says that a portion of the Temple was thrown down. See also the Gospel of Nicodemus.

[4] Similar prodigies were said, or supposed, to accompany the deaths of many great men in former days, as in the case of Cæsar (Virgil, Georg. i. 463, et seq.). Shakespeare has embalmed some traditions of the kind, exactly analogous to the present case. See Julius Cæsar, Act ii., Sc. 2. Again he says: Hamlet, Act i. Sc. 1.

"In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."

Priests and the guards of the Sepulchre—at which it is impossible the evangelist, and most improbable that any informant of his, could have been present;—and which, to our minds, bear evident marks of being subsequent fictions *supposed* in order to complete and render more invulnerable the history of Jesus' resurrection. It is extremely unlikely that the Chief Priests and Pharisees should have thought of taking precautions beforehand against a fraudulent resurrection. We have no reason to believe that they had ever heard of the prophecy to which they allude[1], for it had been uttered only to his own disciples, the twelve, and to them generally with more or less secrecy[2]; and we know that by them it was so entirely disregarded[3], or had been so completely forgotten, that the resurrection of their Lord was not only not expected, but took them completely by surprise. Were the enemies of Christ more attentive to, and believing on, his predictions than his own followers?

The improbability of the sequel of this story is equally striking. That the guard placed by the Sanhedrim at the tomb should, all trembling with affright from the apparition (xxviii. 4), have been at once, and so easily, persuaded to deny the vision, and propagate a lie;—that the Sanhedrim, instead of angrily and contemptuously scouting the story of the soldiers, charging them with having slept, and threatening them with punishment, should have believed their statement, and at the same time, in full conclave, resolved to bribe them to silence and falsehood;—that Roman soldiers, who could scarcely commit a more heinous offence against discipline than to sleep upon their post, should so willingly have accepted money to accuse themselves of such a breach of duty;—are all too improbable suppositions to be readily allowed; especially when the 13th verse indicates a subsequent Jewish rumour as the foundation of the story, and when the utter silence of all the other evangelists and

[1] It is true that John (ii. 19) relates that Jesus said publicly in answer to the Jews' demand for a sign, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again." This John considers to have reference to his resurrection, but we know that the Jews attached no such meaning to it, from v. 20, and also from Matth. xxvi. 61.

[2] Matth. xvi. 21; xx. 19. Mark viii. 31; x. 32. Luke ix. 22; xviii. 33.

[3] This is distinctly stated, John xx. 9: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead," and indeed it is clear from all the evangelical narratives.

apostles respecting a narrative which, if true, would be so essential a feature in their preaching of the resurrection, is duly borne in mind.

Many minor instances in which Matthew has retrenched or added to the accounts of Mark, according as retrenchment or omission would, in his view, most exalt the character of Jesus, are specified in the article already referred to (Prosp. Rev., xxi.), which we recommend to the perusal of all our readers as a perfect pattern of critical reasoning.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIDELITY OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY CONTINUED.—MATTHEW.

In pursuing our inquiry as to the degree of reliance to be placed on Matthew's narrative, we now come to the consideration of those passages in which there is reason to believe that the conversations and discourses of Christ have been incorrectly reported: and that words have been attributed to him which he did not utter, or at least did not utter in the form and context in which they have been transmitted to us. That this should be so, is no more than we ought to expect à priori; for, of all things, discourses and remarks are the most likely to be imperfectly heard, inaccurately reported, and materially altered and corrupted in the course of transmission from mouth to mouth. Indeed, as we do not know, and have no reason to believe, that the discourses of Christ were written down by those who heard them immediately after their delivery, or indeed much before they reached the hands of the evangelists, nothing less than a miracle perpetually renewed for many years could have preserved these traditions perfectly pure and genuine. In admitting the belief, therefore, that they are in several points imperfect and inaccurate, we are throwing no discredit upon the sincerity or capacity, either of the evangelists or their informants, or the original reporters of the sayings of Christ; —we are simply acquiescing in the alleged operation of natural causes[1]. In some cases, it is true, we shall find

[1] This seems to be admitted even by orthodox writers. Thus Mr. Trench says:—"The most earnest oral tradition will in a little while lose its distinctness, undergo essential though insensible modifications. Apart from all desire to vitiate the committed word, yet, little by little, the subjective condition of those to whom it is entrusted, through whom it passes, will infallibly make itself felt; and in such treacherous keeping is all which remains merely in the memories of men, that, *after a very little while*, rival schools of disciples will begin to contend not merely how their Master's words were to be accepted, but *what those very words were*."—Trench's Hulsæan Lectures, p. 15.

reason to believe that the published discourses of Christ have been intentionally altered and artificially elaborated by some of the parties through whose hands they passed;—but in those days, when the very idea of historical criticism was yet unborn, this might have been done without any unfairness of purpose. We know that at that period, historians of far loftier pretensions and more scientific character, writing in countries of far greater literary advancement, seldom scrupled to fill up and round off the harangues of their orators and statesmen with whatever they thought appropriate for them to have said—nay, even to elaborate for them long orations out of the most meagre hearsay fragments[1].

A general view of Matthew, and still more a comparison of his narrative with that of the other three gospels, brings into clear light his entire indifference to chronological or contextual arrangement in his record of the discourses of Christ. Thus in ch. v., vi., vii., we have crowded into one sermon the teachings and aphorisms which in the other evangelists are spread over the whole of Christ's ministry. In ch. xiii. we find collected together no less than six parables of similitudes for the kingdom of heaven. In ch. x. Matthew compresses into one occasion (the sending of the twelve, where many of them are strikingly out of place) a variety of instructions and reflections which must have belonged to a subsequent part of the career of Jesus, where indeed they are placed by the other evangelists. In c. xxiv., in the same manner, all the prophecies relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world are grouped together; while, in many instances, remarks of Jesus are introduced in the midst of others with which they have no connection, and where they are obviously out of place; as xi. 28-30, and xiii. 12, which evidently belongs to xxv. 29.

[1] This in fact was the *custom* of antiquity—the rule, not the exception:—see Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, &c. passim. We find also (see Acts v. 34-39), that Luke himself did not scruple to adopt this common practice, for he gives us a verbatim speech of Gamaliel delivered in the Sanhedrim, after the Apostles had been expressly excluded, and which therefore he could have known only by hearsay report. Moreover it is certain that this speech must have been Luke's, and not Gamaliel's, since it represents Gamaliel in the year A.D. 34 or 35, as speaking in the past tense of an agitator, Theudas, who did not appear, as we learn from Josephus, till after the year A.D. 44.

In c. xi. 12 is the following expression: "And *from the days of John the Baptist until now*, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm." Now though the meaning of the passage is difficult to ascertain with precision, yet the expression "from the days of John the Baptist until now," clearly implies that the speaker lived at a considerable distance of time from John; and though appropriate enough in a man who wrote in the year A.D. 65, or 30 years after John, could not have been used by one who spoke in the year A.D. 30 or 33, while John was yet alive. This passage, therefore, is from Matthew, not from Jesus.

In c. xvi. 9, 10, is another remark which we may say with perfect certainty was put unwarrantably into the mouth of Christ either by the evangelist, or the source from which he copied. We have already seen that there could not have been more than *one* miraculous feeding of the multitude; yet Jesus is here made to refer to *two*. The explanation at once forces itself upon our minds, that the evangelist, having, in his uncritical and confused conceptions, related two feedings, and finding among his materials a discourse of Jesus having reference to a miraculous occurrence of that nature, perceived the inconsistency of narrating *two* such events, and yet making Jesus refer to only *one*, and therefore added verse 10, by way of correcting the incongruity. The same remark will apply to Mark also.

The passage at c. xvi. 18, 19, bears obvious marks of being either an addition to the words of Christ, or a corruption of them. "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The confession by Simon Peter of his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus is given by all the four evangelists,

and there is no reason to question the accuracy of this part of the narrative. Mark and John, as well as Matthew, relate that Jesus bestowed on Simon the surname of Peter, and this part, therefore, may also be admitted. The remainder of the narrative corresponds almost exactly with the equivalent passages in the other evangelists; but the 18th verse has no parallel in any of them. Moreover, the word "Church" betrays its later origin. The word ἐκκλησία was used by the disciples to signify those assemblies and organizations into which they formed themselves after the death of Jesus, and is met with frequently in the epistles, but nowhere in the gospels, except in the passage under consideration, and one other, which is equally, or even more, contestable[1]. It was in use when the gospel was written, but not when the discourse of Jesus was delivered. It belongs, therefore, to Matthew, not to Jesus.

The following verse, conferring spiritual authority, or, as it is commonly called, "the power of the keys" upon Peter, is repeated by Matthew in connection with another discourse (in c. xviii. 18); and a similar passage is found in John (c. xx. 23), who, however, places the promise after the resurrrection, and represents it as made to the apostles generally, subsequent to the descent of the Holy Spirit. But there are considerations which effectually forbid our receiving this promise, at least as given by Matthew, as having really emanated from Christ. In the *first* place, in both passages it occurs in connection with the suspicious word "Church," and indicates an ecclesiastical as opposed to a Christian origin. *Secondly*, Mark, who narrates the previous conversation, omits this promise so honourable and distinguishing to Peter, which it is impossible for those who consider him as Peter's mouthpiece, or amanuensis, to believe he would have done, had any such promise been actually made[2]. Luke, the companion and intimate of Paul and other apostles, equally omits all mention of this singular conversation. *Thirdly*, not only do we

[1] C. xviii. 17. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." The whole passage, with its context, betokens an ecclesiastical, not a Christian spirit.

[2] See Thirlwall, cvii., Introd. to Schleiermacher.

know Peter's utter unfitness to be the depositary of such a fearful power, from his impetuosity and instability of character, and Christ's thorough perception of this unfitness, but we find that immediately after it is said to have been conferred upon him, his Lord addresses him indignantly by the epithet of Satan, and rebukes him for his presumption and unspirituality; and shortly afterwards this very man thrice denied his master. Can any one maintain it to be conceivable that Jesus should have conferred the awful power of deciding the salvation or damnation of his fellow-men upon one so frail, so faulty, and so fallible? *Does any one believe that he did?* We cannot, therefore, regard the 19th verse otherwise than as an unwarranted addition to the words of Jesus, and painfully indicative of the growing pretensions of the Church at the time the gospel was compiled.

In xxiii. 35, we have the following passage purporting to be uttered by Jesus in the course of his denunciations against the Scribes and Pharisees: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Now, two Zachariases are recorded in history as having been thus slain—Zacharias, son of Jehoida, 850 years before Christ (2 Chron. xxiv. 20), and Zacharias, son of Baruch, 35 years after Christ (Joseph., Bell. Jud. iv. 4)[1]. But when we reflect that Jesus could scarcely have intended to refer to a murder committed 850 years before his time as terminating the long series of Jewish crimes; and moreover, that at the period the evangelist wrote, the assassination of the son of Baruch was a recent event, and one likely to have made a deep impression, and that the circumstances of the murder (between the Temple and the Altar) apply much more closely to the second than to the first Zacharias, we cannot hesitate to admit the conclusion of Hug, Eichhorn, and other critics[2], that the Zacharias

[1] It is true that there was a third Zacharias, the Prophet, also son of a Barachias, who lived about 500 years before Christ; but this man could not have been the one intended by Matthew, for no record exists, or appears to have existed, of the manner of his death, and in his time the Temple was in ruins.—See Hennell, p. 81, note.

[2] Hug, p. 314. Thirlwall, p. xcix., note.

mentioned by Josephus was the one intended by Matthew. Hug says —

"There cannot be a doubt, if we attend to the name, the fact and its circumstances, and the object of Jesus in citing it, that it was the same Ζαχαριὰς Βαρούχου, who, according to Josephus, a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem, was unjustly slain in the temple. The name is the same, the murder, and the remarkable circumstances which distinguished it, correspond, as well as the character of the man. Moreover, when Jesus says that all the innocent blood which had been shed, from Abel to Zacharias, should be avenged upon 'this generation,' the ἀπὸ and ἕως denote the beginning and the end of a period. This period ends with Zacharias; he was to be the last before the vengeance should be executed. The threatened vengeance, however, was the ruin of Jerusalem, which immediately followed his death. Must it not, then, have been the same Zacharias whose death is distinguished in history, among so many murdered, as the only righteous man between Ananias and the destruction of the Holy City? The Zacharias mentioned in the Chronicles is not the one here intended. He was a son of Jehoida, and was put to death, not between the temple and the altar, or ἐν μέσῳ τῷ ναῷ, but in the court; nor was he the last of those unjustly slain, or one with whom an epoch in the Jewish annals terminates."

Here then we have an anachronism strikingly illustrative of that confusion of mind which characterises this evangelist, and which betrays at the same time that an unwarrantable liberty has been taken by some one with the language of Jesus. He is here represented as speaking in the past tense of an event which did not occur till 35 years after his death, and which, consequently, though fresh and present to the mind of the *writer*, could not have been in the mind of the *speaker*, unless prophetically; in which case it would have been expressed in the future, not in the past tense[1]; and would, moreover, have been wholly unintelligible to his hearers. If, therefore, as there seems no

[1] "Hug imagines," says Bishop Thirlwall, loc. cit., "that "Christ *predicted* the death of this Zacharias, son of Barachias, but that St. Matthew, who saw the prediction accomplished, expressed his knowledge of the fact by using the past tense." *But should this then have been the aorist* ἐφονεύσατε?

reason to doubt, the evangelist intended to specify the Zacharias mentioned by Josephus, he was guilty of putting into the mouth of Jesus words which Jesus never uttered.

In ch. xxviii. 19, is another passage which we may say with almost certainty never came from the mouth of Christ: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That this definite form of baptism proceeded from Jesus, is opposed by the fact, that such an allocation of the Father, Son, and Spirit, does not elsewhere appear, except as a form of salutation in the epistles;—while as a definite form of baptism it is nowhere met with throughout the New Testament. Moreover, it was not the form *used*, and could scarcely therefore have been the form *commanded;* for in the apostolic epistles, and even in the Acts, the form always is "baptizing into Christ Jesus," or, "into the name of the Lord Jesus;"[1] while the threefold reference to God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, is only found in ecclesiastical writers, as Justin. Indeed the formula in Matthew sounds so exactly as if it had been borrowed from the ecclesiastical ritual, that it is difficult to avoid the supposition that it was transferred thence into the mouth of Jesus. Many critics, in consequence, regard it as a subsequent interpolation.

There are two other classes of discourses attributed to Jesus both in this and in the other gospels, over the character of which much obscurity hangs:—those in which he is said to have foretold his own death and resurrection; and those in which he is represented as speaking of his second advent. The instances of the first are in Matthew *five* in number, in Mark *four*, in Luke *four*, and in John *three*[2].

Now we will at once concede that it is extremely probable that Christ might easily have foreseen that a career and conduct like his could, in such a time and country, terminate only in a violent and cruel death; and that indications of such an impending fate thickened fast around him as his

[1] Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27. Acts ii. 38; viii. 16; x. 48; xix. 5.

[2] Matth. xii. 40; xvi. 21; xvii. 9, 22, 23; xx. 17–19; xxvi. 3. Mark viii. 31; ix. 10, 31; x. 33; xiv. 28. Luke ix. 22, 44; xviii. 32, 33; xxii. 15. John ii. 20–22; iii. 14; xii. 32, 33; all very questionable.

ministry drew nearer to a close. It is even possible, though in the highest degree unlikely[1], that his study of the prophets might have led him to the conclusion that the expected Messiah, whose functions he believed himself sent to fulfil, was to be a suffering and dying Prince. We do not even dispute that he might have been so amply endowed with the spirit of prophecy as distinctly to foresee his approaching crucifixion and resurrection. But we find in the evangelists themselves insuperable difficulties in the way of admitting the belief that he actually did predict these events, in the language, or with anything of the precision, which is there ascribed to him.

In the fourth gospel, these predictions are three in number[2], and in all the language is doubtful, mysterious, and obscure, and the interpretation commonly put upon them is not that suggested by the words themselves, nor that which suggested itself to those who heard them; but is one affixed to them by the evangelist after the event supposed to be referred to; it is an *interpretatio ex eventu*[3]. In the three synoptical gospels, however, the predictions are numerous, precise, and conveyed in language, which it was impossible to mistake. Thus (in Matth. xx. 18, 19, and parallel passages), "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." Lan-

[1] It was in the highest degree unlikely, because this was neither the interpretation put upon the prophecies among the Jews of that time, nor their natural signification, but it was an interpretation of the disciples *ex eventu*.

[2] We pass over those touching intimations of approaching separation contained in the parting discourses of Jesus during and immediately preceding the last supper, as there can be little doubt that at that time his fate was so imminent as to have become evident to any acute observer, without the supposition of supernatural information.

[3] In the case of the first of these predictions—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,"—we can scarcely admit that the words were used by Jesus (if uttered by him at all) in the sense ascribed to them by John; since the words were spoken *in the temple*, and in answer to the demand for a sign, and could therefore only have conveyed, and have been intended to convey, the meaning which we know they actually did convey to the inquiring Jews. In the two other cases (or three, if we reckon viii. 28, as one), the language of Jesus is too indefinite for us to know what meaning he intended it to convey. The expression "to be lifted up" is thrice used, and may mean exaltation, glorification (its natural signification), or, artificially and figuratively, *might* be intended to refer to his crucifixion.

guage such as this, definite, positive, explicit, and circumstantial, if really uttered, could not have been misunderstood, but must have made a deep and ineradicable impression on all who heard it, especially when repeated, as it is stated to have been, on several distinct occasions. Yet we find ample proof that *no such impression was made;*—that the disciples had no conception of their Lord's approaching death—still less of his resurrection;—and that so far from their expecting either of these events, both, when they occurred, took them entirely by surprise;—they were utterly confounded by the one, and could not believe the other.

We find them shortly after (nay, in one instance instantly after) these predictions were uttered, disputing which among them should be greatest in their coming dominion (Matth. xx. 24. Mark ix. 35. Luke xxii. 25);—glorying in the idea of thrones, and asking for seats on his right hand and on his left, in his Messianic kingdom (Matth. xix. 28; xx. 21. Mark x. 37. Luke xxii. 30); which, when he approached Jerusalem they thought "would immediately appear" (Luke xix. 11; xxiv. 21). When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, they first attempted resistance, and then "forsook him and fled;" and so completely were they scattered, that it was left for one of the Sanhedrim, Joseph of Arimathæa, to provide even for his decent burial;—while the women who had "watched afar off," and were still faithful to his memory, brought spices to embalm the body—a sure sign, were any needed, that the idea of his resurrection had never entered into their minds. Further, when the women reported his resurrection to the disciples, "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke xxiv. 11). The conversation, moreover, of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is sufficient proof that the resurrection of their Lord was a conception which had never crossed their thoughts;—and, finally, according to John, when Mary found the body gone, her only notion was that it must have been removed by the gardener (xx. 15).

All this shows, beyond, we think, the possibility of question, that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were wholly unexpected by his disciples. If further proof were wanted, we find it in the words of the evangelists, who re-

peatedly intimate (as if struck by the incongruity we have pointed out) that they "knew not," or "understood not," these sayings. (Mark ix. 31. Luke ix. 45; xviii. 34. John xx. 9.)

Here, then, we have two distinct statements, which mutually exclude and contradict each other. If Jesus really foretold his death and resurrection in the terms recorded in the gospels, it is inconceivable that the disciples should have *misunderstood* him; for no words could be more positive, precise, or intelligible, than those which he is said to have repeatedly addressed to them. Neither could they have *forgotten* what had been so strongly urged upon their memory by their Master, as completely as it is evident from their subsequent conduct they actually did[1]. They might, indeed, have *disbelieved* his prediction (as Peter appears in the first instance to have done), but in that case, his crucifixion would have led them to expect his resurrection, or, at all events, to think of it:—which it did not. The fulfilment of one prophecy would necessarily have recalled the other to their minds.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable—that the predictions were ascribed to Jesus after the event, not really uttered by him. It is, indeed, very probable that, as gloomy anticipations of his own death pressed upon his mind, and became stronger and more confirmed as the danger came nearer, he endeavoured to communicate these apprehensions to his followers, in order to prepare them for an event so fatal to their worldly hopes. That he did so, we think the conversations during, and previous to, the last supper, afford ample proof. These vague intimations of coming evil—*intermingled and relieved, doubtless, by strongly expressed convictions of a future existence of re-union and reward,* disbelieved or disregarded by the disciples at the time—recurred to their minds after all was over; and gathering strength, and expanding in definiteness and fulness during constant repetition for nearly forty years, had, at the period when the evangelists wrote, become consolidated into the fixed prophetic form in which they have been transmitted to us.

[1] Moreover, if they had so completely forgotten these predictions, whence did the evangelists derive them?

Another argument may be adduced, strongly confirmatory of this view. Jesus is repeatedly represented as affirming that his expected sufferings and their glorious termination must take place, *in order that the prophecies might be fulfilled.* (Matth. xxvi. 24, 54. Mark ix. 12; xiv. 49. Luke xiii. 33; xviii. 31; xxii. 37; xxiv. 27.) Now, the passion of the disciples for representing everything connected with Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy, explains why they should have sought, after his death, for passages which might be supposed to prefigure it[1],—and why these accommodations of prophecy should, in process of time, and of transmission, have been attributed to Jesus himself. But if we assume, as is commonly done, that these references to prophecy really proceeded from Christ in the first instance, we are landed in the inadmissible, or at least the embarrassing and unorthodox, conclusion, that he interpreted the prophets erroneously. To confine ourselves to the principal passages only, a profound grammatical and historical exposition has convincingly shown, to all who are in a condition to liberate themselves from dogmatic presuppositions, that in none of these is there any allusion to the sufferings of Christ[2].

One of these references to prophecy in Matthew has evident marks of being an addition to the traditional words of Christ by the evangelist himself. In Matthew xvi. 4, we have the following: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas." The same expression precisely is recorded by Luke (xi. 29), with this addition, showing what the reference to Jonas really meant: "For as Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites so also shall the Son of Man be to this generation. The

[1] "There were sufficient motives for the Christian legend thus to put into the mouth of Jesus, after the event, a prediction of the particular features of his passion, especially of the ignominious crucifixion. The more a Christ crucified became "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23), the more need was there to remove the offence by every possible means; and as among the subsequent events, the resurrection especially served as a *retrospective* cancelling of that shameful death, so it must have been earnestly desired to take the sting from that offensive catastrophe *beforehand* also; and this could not be done more effectually than by such a minute prediction."—Strauss, iii. 54, where this idea is fully developed.

[2] Even Dr. Arnold admitted this fully. (Sermons on Interpretations of Prophecy, Preface.)

men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it; *for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*" But when Matthew *repeats* the same answer of Jesus in answer to the same demand for a sign (xiv. 40), he adds the explanation of the reference, "for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights [which Jesus was *not*, but only one day and two nights] in the heart of the earth;"—and he then proceeds with the same context as Luke.

The prophecies of the second coming of Christ (Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xvii. 22-37; xxi. 5-36) are mixed up with those of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in a manner which has long been the perplexity and despair of orthodox commentators. The obvious meaning of the passages which contain these predictions—the sense in which they were evidently understood by the evangelists who wrote them down—the sense which we know from many sources[1] they conveyed to the minds of the early Christians—clearly is, that the coming of Christ to judge the world should follow *immediately*[2] ("immediately," "in those days,") the destruction of the Holy City, and should take place during the lifetime of the then existing generation. "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32.) "There be some standing here that shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matth. xvi. 28). "Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (Matth. x. 23). "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 23).

Now if these predictions really proceeded from Jesus, he was entirely in error on the subject, and the prophetic spirit was not in him; for not only did his advent not follow close

[1] See 1 Cor. x. 11; xv. 51. Phil. iv. 5. 1 Thess. iv. 15. James v. 8. 1 Peter iv. 7. 1 John ii. 18. Rev. i. 1, 3; xxii. 7, 10, 12, 20.

[2] An apparent contradiction to this is presented by Matth. xxiv. 14; Matth. xiii. 10, where we are told that "the gospel must be first preached to all nations." It appears, however, from Col. i. 5, 6, 23 (see also Romans x. 18), that St. Paul considered this to have been already accomplished in his time.

on the destruction of Jerusalem, but 1800 years have since elapsed, and neither he nor the preliminary signs which were to announce him, have yet appeared. If these predictions did not proceed from him, the evangelist has taken the liberty of putting into the mouth of Christ words and announcements which Christ never uttered.

Much desperate ingenuity has been exerted to separate the predictions relating to Jerusalem from those relating to the Advent; but these exertions have been neither creditable nor successful; and they have already been examined and refuted at great length. Moreover, they are rendered necessary only by two previous *assumptions:* first, that Jesus cannot have been mistaken as to the future; and, secondly, that he really uttered these predictions. Now, neither of these assumptions are capable of proof. The first we shall not dispute, because we have no adequate means of coming to a conclusion on the subject. But as to the second assumption, we think there are several indications that, though the predictions in question were current among the Christians when the gospels were composed, yet that they did not, at least as handed down to us, proceed from the lips of Christ; but were, as far as related to the second advent, the unauthorized anticipations of the disciples; and, as far as related to the destruction of the city, partly gathered from the denunciations of Old Testament prophecy, and partly from actual knowledge of the events which passed under their eyes.

In the *first* place, it is not conceivable that Jesus could have been so true a prophet as to one part of the prediction, and so entirely in error as to the other, both parts referring equally to future events. *Secondly*, the three gospels in which these predictions occur, are allowed to have been written between the years 65 and 72 A.D., or during the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem[1]; that is, they were written during and after the events which they predict. They may, therefore, either have been entirely drawn from the events, or have been vaguely in existence before, but have derived their definiteness and precision from the events. And we have already seen in the case of the first evangelist,

[1] The war began by Vespasian's entering Galilee in the beginning of the year A.D. 67, and the city was taken in the autumn of A.D. 70.

that he, at least, did not scruple to eke out and modify the predictions he recorded, from his own experience of their fulfilment. *Thirdly*, the parallel passages, both in Matthew and Mark, contain an expression twice repeated—"the elect"—which we can say almost with certainty was unknown in the time of Christ, though frequently found in the epistles, and used, at the time the gospels were composed, to designate the members of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER IX.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—MARK AND LUKE.

MANY of the criticisms contained in the two last chapters—tending to prove that Matthew's Gospel contains several statements not strictly accurate, and attributes to Jesus several expressions and discourses which were not really uttered by him—are equally applicable both to Mark and Luke. The similarity—not to say identity—of the greater portion of Mark's narrative with that of Matthew, leaves no room for doubt either that one evangelist copied from the other, or that both employed the same documents, or oral narratives, in the compilation of their histories. Our own clear conviction is that Mark was the earliest in time, and far the most correct in fact.

As we have already stated, we attach little weight to the tradition of the second century, that the second gospel was written by Mark, the companion of Peter. It originated with Papias, whose works are now lost, but who was stated to be a "weak man" by Eusebius, who records a few fragments of his writings. But if the tradition be correct, the omissions in this gospel, as compared with the first, are significant enough. It omits entirely the genealogies, the miraculous conception, several matters relating to Peter (especially his walking on the water, and the commission of the keys [1]), and everything miraculous or improbable relating to the resurrection [2]—everything, in fact, but the simple statement that the body was missing, and that a "young man" assured the visitors that Christ was risen.

[1] See Thirlwall's remarks on this subject. Introd. cvii.

[2] We must not forget that the real genuine Gospel of Mark terminates with the 8th verse of the 16th chapter.

In addition to these, there are two or three peculiarities in the discourses of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, which indicate that the evangelist thought it necessary and allowable slightly to modify the language of them, in order to suit them to the ideas or the feelings of the Gentile converts; if, as is commonly supposed, it was principally designed for them. We copy a few instances of these, though resting little upon them.

Matthew, who wrote for the Jews, has the following passage, in the injunctions pronounced by Jesus on the sending forth of the twelve apostles: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (x. 5.) Mark, who wrote for the Gentiles, *omits entirely this unpalatable charge.* (vi. 7–13.)

Matthew (xv. 24), in the story of the Canaanitish woman, makes Jesus say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Mark (vii. 26) *omits this expression entirely*, and modifies the subsequent remark. In Matthew it is thus:—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs." In Mark it is softened by the preliminary, "*Let the children first be filled,*" &c.

Matthew (xxiv. 20), "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day.*" Mark omits the last clause, which would have had no meaning for any but the Jews, whose Sabbath day's journey was by law restricted to a small distance.

In the promise given to the disciples, in answer to Peter's question, "Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The following verse, given by Matthew (xix. 28), *is omitted by Mark* (x. 28):—"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The Gospel of Luke, which is a work in some respects of more pretension, and unquestionably of more literary merit, than the two first, will require a few additional observations. The remarks we have made on the prophecies of his own sufferings and resurrection, alleged by Matthew and Mark to have been uttered by Jesus, apply equally to Luke's narrative, in which similar passages occur; and in these, there-

fore, we must admit that the third evangelist, like the other two, ascribed to Jesus discourses which never really proceeded from him[1]. But besides these, there are several passages in Luke which bear an equally apocryphal character, some of which it will be interesting to notice.

The first chapter, from verse 5–80, contains the account of the annunciation and birth of John the Baptist, with all the marvellous circumstances attending it, and also the annunciation to Mary, and the miraculous conception of Jesus —an account exhibiting many remarkable discrepancies with the corresponding narrative in Matthew. We are spared the necessity of a detailed investigation of this chapter by the agreement of the most learned critics, both of the orthodox and sceptical schools, in considering the narrative as poetical and legendary. It is examined at great length by Strauss, who is at the head of the most daring class of the Biblical Commentators of Germany, and by Schleiermacher, who ranks first among the learned divines of that country. The latter (in the work translated by one of our most erudite and liberal Prelates, and already often referred to), writes thus, pp. 25–7:—

"Thus, then, we begin by detaching the first chapter as an originally independent composition. If we consider it in this light somewhat more closely, we cannot resist the impression that it was originally rather a little poetical work than a properly-historical narrative. The latter supposition, in its strictest sense at all events, no one will adopt, or contend that the angel Gabriel announced the advent of the Messiah in figures so purely Jewish, and in expressions taken mostly from the Old Testament; or that the alternate song between Elizabeth and Mary actually took place in the manner described; or that Zacharias, at the instant of recovering his speech, made use of it to utter the hymn, without being disturbed by the joy and surprise of the company, by which the narrator himself allows his description to be interrupted. At all events we should then be obliged to suppose that the author made additions of his own, and en-

[1] The remark will perhaps occur to some, that the circumstance of *three* evangelists ascribing the same language to Jesus, is a strong proof that he really uttered it. But the fallacy of this argument will be apparent when we remember that there is ample evidence that they all drew from the same sources, namely, the extant current tradition.

riched the historical narrative by the lyrical effusions of his own genius." . . . . . "If we consider the whole grouping of the narrative, there naturally presents itself to us a pleasing little composition, completely in the style and manner of several Jewish poems, still extant among our apocryphal writings, written in all probability originally in Aramaic by a Christian of the more liberal Judaizing school." . . . . . "There are many other statements which I should not venture to pronounce historical, but would rather explain by the occasion the poet had for them. To these belongs, in the first place, John's being a late-born child, which is evidently only imagined for the sake of analogy with several heroes of Hebrew antiquity; and, in the next place, the relation between the ages of John and Christ, and likewise the consanguinity of Mary and Elizabeth, which, besides, it is difficult to reconcile with the assertion of John (John i. 33), that he did not know Christ before his baptism."

Strauss's analysis of the chapter is in the highest degree masterly and convincing, and we think cannot fail to satisfy all whose minds have been trained in habits of logical investigation. After showing at great length the unsatisfactoriness and inadmissibility of both the supernatural and rationalistic interpretations, he shows, by a comparison of similar legends in the Old Testament—the birth of Ishmael, Isaac, Samuel, and Samson, in particular—how exactly the narrative in Luke is framed in accordance with the established ideas and rules of Hebrew poetry[1].

"The scattered traits," says he[2], "respecting the late birth of different distinguished men, as recorded in the Old Testament, blended themselves into a compound image in the mind of the author, whence he selected the features most

[1] We cannot agree with one of Strauss's critics (see Prospective Review, Nov. 1846), that the evident poetical character of the first chapters of Matthew and Luke, their similarity with parts of the apocryphal gospels and early Christian writings, and their dissimilarity in tone with the rest of the gospels with which they are incorporated, are sufficient to decide the question against their genuineness. If this argument were valid, we must pronounce against the genuineness of other passages of our gospels on the same ground—e. g. the miracle of Cana—the miraculous draught of fishes—and the piece of money in the fish's mouth—and others. The genuineness of these initial chapters has often been denied, but without sufficient warrant from external evidence.

[2] Leben Jesu, i. 118, et seq.

appropriate to his present subject, Of the children born of aged parents Isaac is the most ancient prototype. As it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, 'they were both advanced in days,' so Abraham and Sarah 'were advanced in days,'[1] when they were promised a son. It is likewise from this history that the incredulity of the father on account of the advanced age of both parents, and the demand of a sign, are borrowed. As Abraham, when Jehovah promised him a numerous posterity through Isaac, who should inherit the land of Canaan, doubtingly inquires, 'Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?'—so Zacharias, 'Whereby shall I know this?' The incident of the angel announcing the birth of the Baptist is taken from the history of another late-born son, Samson. The command which before his birth predestined the Baptist—whose later ascetic mode of life was known—to be a Nazarite, is taken from the same source. Both were to be consecrated to God from the womb, and the same diet was prescribed for both[2] . . . . . The lyrical effusions in Luke are from the history of Samuel. As Samuel's mother, when consigning him to the care of the High Priest, breaks forth into a hymn, so does the father of John at the circumcision; though the particular expressions in the canticle uttered by Mary, in the same chapter, have a closer resemblance to Hannah's song of praise, than that of Zacharias. The only supernatural incident of the narrative, of which the Old Testament offers no precise analogy, is the dumbness. But if it be borne in mind that the asking and receiving a sign from heaven in confirmation of a promise or prophecy was common among the Hebrews (Isaiah vii. 11); that the temporary loss of one of the senses was the peculiar punishment inflicted after a heavenly vision (Acts ix. 8, 17); that Daniel became dumb while the angel was speaking with him, and did not recover his speech till the angel had touched his lips and opened his mouth (Dan. x. 15); the origin of this incident also will be found in legend, and not in historical fact. So that here we stand upon purely mythico-poetical ground; the only historical reality which we can hold fast as positive matter of fact being this:—the impression made by John the Baptist, in virtue of his ministry, and his relation

[1] The original words are the same in both instances.
[2] Compare Luke i. 15, with Judges xiii. 4, 5, and Numbers vi. 3.

to Jesus, was so powerful as to lead to the subsequent glorification of his birth in connection with the Christian legend of the birth of the Messiah."

In the second chapter we have the account of the birth of Jesus, and the accompanying apparition of a multitude of angels to shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem—as to the historical foundation of which Strauss and Schleiermacher are at variance; the former regarding it as wholly mythical, and the latter as based upon an actual occurrence, imperfectly remembered in after times, when the celebrity of Jesus caused every contribution to the history of his birth and infancy to be eagerly sought for. All that we can say on the subject with any certainty is, that the tone of the narrative is legendary. The poetical rhapsody of Simeon when Jesus was presented in the temple may be passed over with the same remark;—but the 33rd verse, where we are told that "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him," proves clearly one of two things:—either the unhistorical character of the Song of Simeon, and of the consequent astonishment of the parents of Jesus—or the unreality of the miraculous annunciation and conception. It is impossible, if an angel had actually announced to Mary the birth of the divine child in the language, or in anything resembling the language, recorded in Luke i. 31-35; and if, in accordance with that announcement, Mary had found herself with child before she had any *natural* possibility of being so—that she should have felt any astonishment whatever at the prophetic announcement of Simeon, so consonant with the angelic promise, especially when occurring after the miraculous vision of the Shepherds, which, we are told, "she pondered in her heart." Schleiermacher has felt this difficulty, and endeavours to evade it by considering the first and second chapters to be two monographs, originally by different hands, which Luke incorporated into his gospel. This was very probably the case; but it does not avoid the difficulty, as it involves giving up ii. 33, as an unauthorized and incorrect statement.

The genealogy of Jesus, as given in the third chapter, may be in the main correct, though there are some perplexities in one portion of it; but if the previous narrative be correct, it is not the genealogy of Jesus at all, but only of Joseph, who was no relation to him whatever, but simply his

guardian. On the other hand, if the preparer of the genealogy, or the evangelist who records it, knew or believed the story of the miraculous conception, we can conceive no reason for his admitting a pedigree which is either wholly meaningless, or destructive of his previous statements. The insertion in verse 23, "as was supposed," whether by the evangelist or a subsequent copyist, merely shows that whoever made it perceived the incongruity, but preferred neutralizing the genealogy to omitting it.[1]

The account given by Luke (iii. 21) of the visible and audible signs from heaven at the Baptism of Jesus, has been very generally felt and allowed to be incompatible with the inquiry subsequently made by John the Baptist (vii. 19) as to whether Jesus were the Messiah or not; and the incongruity is considered to indicate inaccuracy or interpolation in one of the two narratives. It is justly held impossible that if John had seen the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus, and had heard a heavenly voice declaring him to be the beloved Son of God, he could ever have entertained a doubt that he was the Messiah, whose coming he himself had just announced[2] (ver. 16). According to Luke, as he now stands, John expected the Messiah—described himself as his forerunner—saw at the moment of the Baptism a supernatural shape, and heard a supernatural voice announcing Jesus to be that Messiah;—and yet, shortly after—on hearing, too, of miracles which should have confirmed his belief, had it ever wavered—he sends a message implying doubt (or rather ignorance), and asking the question which Heaven itself had already answered in his hearing. Some commentators have endeavoured to escape from the difficulty by pleading that the appearances at Baptism might have been perceptible to Jesus alone; and they have adduced the use of the second

[1] The whole story of the Incarnation, however, is effectually discredited by the fact that none of the Apostles or sacred Historians make any subsequent reference to it, or indicate any knowledge of it.

[2] Neander conceives that doubt may have assailed the mind of John in his dismal prison, and led to a transient questioning of his earlier conviction, and that it was in this state of feeling that he sent his disciples to Jesus. But, in the first place, the language of the message is less that of *doubt* than of *inquiry*, and would appear to intimate that the idea of Jesus' character and mission had been then first suggested to him by the miracles of which reports had reached him in his prison. And in the next place, doubt assails men who have *formed an opinion* from observation or induction, not men who have received positive and divine communication of a fact.

person by the divine voice ("*Thou art* my beloved Son") in Mark and Luke, and the peculiar language of Matthew, in confirmation of this view. But (not to argue that, if the vision and the voice were imperceptible to the spectators, they could not have given that public and conclusive attestation to the Messiahship of Jesus which was their obvious object and intention) a comparison of the four accounts clearly show that the evangelists *meant* to state that the dove was visible and the voice audible to John and to all the spectators, who, according to Luke, must have been numerous. In Matthew the grammatical construction of iii. 16, would intimate that it was Jesus who saw the heavens open and the dove descend, but that the expression "alighting upon him," ἐρχόμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν, should in this case have been ἐφ' αὑτόν, "upon himself." However, it is very possible that Matthew may have written inaccurate, as he certainly wrote unclassical, Greek. But the voice in the next verse, speaking in the third person, "This is my beloved Son," must have been addressed to the spectators, not to Jesus. Mark has the same unharmonizing expression, ἐπ' αὐτόν. Luke describes the scene as passing before numbers, "when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized";—and then adds to the account of the other evangelists that the dove descended "in a bodily shape," ἐν σωματικῷ εἴδει, as if to contradict the idea that it was a subjective, not an objective fact,—a vision, not a phenomenon; he can only mean that it was an appearance visible to all present. The version given in the fourth evangelist shows still more clearly that such was the meaning generally attached to the tradition current among the Christians at the time it was embodied in the gospels. The Baptist is there represented as affirming that he himself saw the Spirit descending like a dove upon Jesus, and that it was this appearance which convinced him of the Messiahship of Jesus.

Considering all this, then, we must admit that, while the naturalness of John's message to Christ, and the exact accordance of the two accounts given of it, render the historical accuracy of that relation highly probable, the discrepancies in the four narratives of the baptism strongly indicate, either that the original tradition came from different sources, or that it has undergone considerable modi-

fication in the course of transmission; and also that the narratives themselves are discredited by the subsequent message. We think with Schleiermacher, the great defender and eulogist of Luke, that the words ἐν σωματικῷ εἴδει are an interpolation which our evangelist thought himself at liberty to make by way of rendering the picture more graphic, without perceiving their inconsistency with a subsequent portion of his narrative.

In all the synoptical gospels we find instances of the cure of demoniacs by Jesus early in his career, in which the demons, promptly, spontaneously, and loudly, bear testimony to his Messiahship. These statements occur once in Matthew (viii. 29);—four times in Mark (i. 24, 34; iii. 11; v. 7); and three times in Luke (iv. 33, 41; viii. 28[1]). Now, two points are evident to common sense, and are fully admitted by honest criticism:—*first*, that these demoniacs were lunatic and epileptic patients; and, *secondly*, that Jesus (or the narrators who framed the language of Jesus throughout the synoptical gospels) shared the common belief that these maladies were caused by evil spirits inhabiting the bodies of the sufferers. We are then landed in this conclusion—certainly not a probable one, nor the one intended to be conveyed by the narrators—that the idea of Jesus being the Messiah was adopted by madmen before it had found entrance into the public mind, apparently even before it was received by his immediate disciples—was in fact first suggested by madmen;—in other words, that it was an idea which originated with insane brains—which presented itself to, and found acceptance with, insane brains more readily than sane ones. The conception of the evangelists clearly was that Jesus derived honour (and his mission confirmation) from this early recognition of his Messianic character by hostile spirits of a superior order of Intelligences; but to us, who know that these supposed superior Intelligences were really unhappy men whose natural intellect had been perverted or impaired, the effect of the narratives becomes absolutely reversed;—and if they are to be

[1] It is worthy of remark that no narrative of the healing of demoniacs, stated as such, occurs in the fourth gospel. This would intimate it to be the work of a man who had outgrown, or had never entertained, the idea of maladies arising from possession. It is one of many indications in this evangelist of a Greek rather than a Jewish mind.

accepted as historical, they lead inevitably to the conclusion that the idea of the Messiahship of Jesus was originally formed in disordered brains, and spread thence among the mass of the disciples. The only rescue from this conclusion lies in the admission, that these narratives are not historical, but mythic, and belong to that class of additions which early grew up in the Christian Church, out of the desire to honour and aggrandise the memory of its Founder, and which our uncritical evangelists embodied as they found them.

Passing over a few minor passages of doubtful authenticity or accuracy,[1] we come to one near the close of the gospel, which we have no scruple in pronouncing to be an unwarranted interpolation. In xxii. 36–38, Jesus is reported, after the Last Supper, to have said to his disciples, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said, It is enough." Christ never could have uttered such a command, nor, we should imagine, anything which could have been mistaken for it. The very idea is contradicted by his whole character, and utterly precluded by the narratives of the other evangelists;—for when Peter did use the sword, he met with a severe rebuke from his Master:—"Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it,"—according to John.—"Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword,"—according to Matthew. The passage we conceive to be a clumsy invention of some early narrator, to account for the remarkable fact of Peter having a sword at the time of Christ's apprehension; and it is inconceivable to us how a sensible compiler like Luke could have admitted into his history such an apocryphal and unharmonising fragment.

In conclusion, then, it appears certain that in all the synoptical gospels we have events related which did not really occur, and words ascribed to Jesus which Jesus did not utter; and that many of these words and events are of

[1] Compare Luke ix. 50, with xi. 23, where we probably have the same original expression differently reported. Schleiermacher, with all his reverence for Luke, decides (p. 94) that Luke vi. 24–26, is an addition to Christ's words by the evangelist himself—an "innocent interpolation," he calls it. For the anachronism in xi. 51, see our remarks on the corresponding passage in Matthew.

great significance. In the great majority of these instances, however, this incorrectness does not imply any want of honesty on the part of the evangelists, but merely indicates that they adopted and embodied, without much scrutiny or critical acumen, whatever probable and honourable narratives they found current in the Christian community.

CHAPTER X.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—GOSPEL OF JOHN.

In the examination of the fourth Gospel a different mode of criticism from that hitherto pursued is required. Here we do not find, so frequently as in the other evangelists, particular passages which pronounce their own condemnation, by anachronisms, peculiarity of language, or incompatibility with others more obviously historical;—but the whole tone of the delineations, the tenour of the discourses, and the general course of the narrative, are utterly different from those contained in the synoptical gospels, and also from what we should expect from a Jew speaking to Jews, writing of Jews, imbued with the spirit, and living in the land, of Judaism.

By the common admission of all recent critics, this gospel is rather to be regarded as a polemic, than an historic composition.[1] It was written less with the intention of giving a complete and continuous view of Christ's character and career, than to meet and confute certain heresies which had sprung up in the Christian Church near the close of the first century, by selecting, from the memory of the author, or the traditions then current among believers, such narratives and discourses as were conceived to be most opposed to the heresies in question. Now these heresies related almost exclusively to the person and nature of Jesus; on which points we have many indications that great difference of opinion existed, even during the apostolic period. The obnoxious doctrines especially pointed at in the gospel appear, both from internal evidence and external testimony,[2] to be those held

[1] See Hug, Strauss, Hennell, De Wette. Also Dr. Tait's "Suggestions."

[2] Irenæus, Jerome, Epiphanius. See Hug, § 51. See also a very detailed account of the Gnostics, in Norton's Genuineness of the Gospels, ii. c. 1, 2.

by Cerinthus and the Nicolaitans, which, according to Hug, were as follows:—The one Eternal God is too pure, perfect, and pervading an essence to be able to operate on matter; but from him emanated a number of inferior and gradually degenerating spiritual natures, one of whom was the Creator of the World, hence its imperfections. Jesus was simply and truly a man, though an eminently great and virtuous one; but one of the above spiritual natures—the Christ, the Son of God—united itself to Jesus at his baptism, and thus conferred upon him superhuman power. "This Christ, as an immaterial Being of exalted origin, one of the purer kinds of spirits, was from his nature unsusceptible of material affections of suffering and pain. He, therefore, at the commencement of the passion, resumed his separate existence, abandoned Jesus to pain and death, and soared upwards to his native heaven. Cerinthus distinguished *Jesus* and *Christ*, *Jesus* and the *Son of God*, as beings of different nature and dignity.[1] The Nicolaitans held similar doctrines in regard to the Supreme Deity and his relation to mankind, and an inferior spirit who was the Creator of the World. Among the subaltern orders of spirits they considered the most distinguished to be the only-begotten, the μονογενὴς (whose existence, however, had a beginning), and the λόγος, the Word, who was an immediate descendant of the only-begotten."[2]

These, then, were the opinions which the author of the fourth gospel wrote to controvert; in confirmation of which being his object we have his own statement (xx. 31): "These are written" (not that ye may know the life and understand the character of our great Teacher, but that ye may believe his nature to be what I affirm) "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Now, a narrative written with a controversial aim—a narrative, more especially, consisting of recollected or selected circumstances and discourses—carries within it, as everyone will admit, from the very nature of fallible humanity, an obvious element of inaccuracy. A man who *writes a history to prove a doctrine* must be something more than a man, if he

[1] Several critics contend that the original reading of 1 John iv. 3, was "Every spirit that *separateth* Jesus (from the Christ) is not of God."—See Hug, p. 423.

[2] Hug, § 51.

writes that history with a scrupulous fidelity of fact and colouring. Accordingly, we find that the public discourses of Jesus in this gospel turn almost exclusively upon the dignity of his own person, which topic is brought forward in a manner and with a frequency which it is impossible to regard as historical. The prominent feature in the character of Jesus, as here depicted, is an overweening tendency to self-glorification. We see no longer, as in the other gospels, a Prophet eager to bring men to God, and to instruct them in righteousness, but one whose whole mind seems *occupied*—not *informed*—with the grandeur of his own nature and mission. In the three first gospels we have the message; in the fourth we have nothing but the messenger. If any of our readers will peruse the gospel with this observation in their minds, we are persuaded the result will be a very strong and probably painful impression that they cannot here be dealing with the genuine language of Jesus, but simply with a composition arising out of deep conviction of his superior nature, left in the mind of the writer by the contemplation of his splendid genius and his noble and lovely character.

The difference of style and subject between the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel and in the synoptical ones, has been much dwelt upon, and we think by no means too much, as proving the greater or less unauthenticity of the former. This objection has been met by the supposition that the finer intellect and more spiritual character of John induced him to select, and enabled him to record, the more subtle and speculative discourses of his Master, which were unacceptable or unintelligible to the more practical and homely minds of the other disciples; and reference is made to the parallel case of Xenophon and Plato, whose reports of the conversations of Socrates are so different in tone and matter as to render it very difficult to believe that both sat at the feet of the same Master, and listened to the same teaching. But the citation is an unfortunate one; for in this case, also, it is more than suspected that the more simple recorder was the more correct one, and that the sublimer and subtler peculiarities in the discourses reported by Plato, belong rather to the disciple than to the Teacher. Had John merely *superadded* some more refined and mystical discourses omitted by his predecessors, the supposition in question might have been admitted;—but it is impossible not to perceive that here the

whole tone of the mind delineated is new and discrepant, though often eminently beautiful.

Another argument, which may be considered as conclusive against the historical fidelity of the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel is, that not only they, but the discourses of John the Baptist likewise, are entirely in the style of the evangelist himself, where he introduces his own remarks, both in the gospel and in the first epistle. He makes both Jesus and the Baptist speak exactly as he himself speaks. Compare the following passages:—

John iii. 31-36. (Baptist loquitur). He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the spirit by measure.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

1 Epistle iii. 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life.

1 Epistle iv. 6. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us.

1 Epistle v. 9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of

John viii. 23 (Jesus loq.). Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

iii. 11 (Jesus loq.). We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our testimony.

viii. 26 (Jesus loq.). I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.—(See also vii. 16-18; xiv. 24.)

v. 20 (Jesus loq.). The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth.

xiii. 3 (Evangelist loq.). Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.

vi. 47 (Jesus loq.). He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.—(See also 1 Epistle v. 10-13, and Gospel iii. 18, where the evangelist or Jesus speaks).

vi. 40 (Jesus loq.). And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.

v. 24 (Jesus loq.). He that heareth my word . . . . hath passed from death unto life.

viii. 47 (Jesus loq.). He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

v. 34, etc. (Jesus loq.). I receive not testimony from man. . . . . I have greater witness than that of

God which he hath witnessed of his Son.

xix. 35 (John loq.). And his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true.

xxi. 24. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things; . . . and we know that his witness is true.

John . . . the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.

v. 32. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

Another indication that in a great part of the fourth gospel we have not the genuine discourses of Jesus, is found in the mystical and enigmatical nature of the language. This peculiarity, of which we have scarcely a trace in the other evangelists, beyond the few parables which they did not at first understand, but which Jesus immediately explained to them, pervades the fourth gospel. The great Teacher is here represented as absolutely labouring to be unintelligible, to soar out of the reach of his hearers, and at once perplex and disgust them. "It is the constant method of this evangelist, in detailing the conversations of Jesus, to form the knot and progress of the discussions, by making the interlocutors understand literally what Jesus intended figuratively. The type of the dialogue is that in which language intended spiritually is understood carnally." The instances of this are inconceivably frequent and unnatural. We have the conversation with the Jews about "the temple of his body" (ii. 21);—the mystification of Nicodemus on the subject of regeneration (iii. 3–10);—the conversation with the Samaritan woman (iv. 10–15);—with his disciples about "the food which ye know not of" (iv. 32);—with the people about the "bread from heaven" (vi. 31–35);—with the Jews about giving them his flesh to eat (vi. 48–66);—with the Pharisees about his disappearance (vii. 33–39, and viii. 21, 22); again about his heavenly origin and pre-existence (viii. 37, 34, and 56–58); and with his disciples about the sleep of Lazarus (xi. 11–14). Now, in the first place, it is very improbable that Jesus, who came to preach the gospel to the poor, should so constantly have spoken in a style which his hearers could not understand; and in the next place, it is equally improbable that an Oriental people, so accustomed to figurative language,[1] and whose literature was so eminently metaphori-

[1] See the remarks of Strauss on the conversation with Nicodemus, from which it appears that the image of a new birth was a current one among the Jews, and *could not* have been so misunderstood by a Master in Israel, and in fact that the whole conversation is unquestionably fictitious.—ii. 154.

cal, should have misapprehended the words of Jesus so stupidly and so incessantly as the evangelist represents them to have done.

But perhaps the most conclusive argument against the historical character of the discourses in the fourth gospel, is to be found in the fact that, whether dialogues or monologues, they are complete and continuous, resembling compositions rather than recollections, and of a length which it is next to impossible could have been accurately retained—even if we adopt Bertholdt's improbable hypothesis, that the Apostle took notes of Jesus' discourses at the time of their delivery. Notwithstanding all that has been said as to the possible extent to which the powers of memory may go, it is difficult for an unprepossessed mind to believe that discourses such as that contained in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters, could have been accurately retained and reported unless by a shorthand writer, or by one favoured with supernatural assistance. "We hold it therefore to be established" (says Strauss,[1] and in the main we agree with him), "that the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel are mainly free compositions of the evangelist; but we have admitted that he has culled several sayings of Jesus from an authentic tradition, and hence we do not extend this proposition to those passages which are countenanced by parallels in the synoptical gospels. In these latter compilations we have an example of the vicissitudes which befall discourses that are preserved only in the memory of a second party. Severed from their original connection, and broken up into smaller and smaller fragments, they present, when reassembled, the appearance of a mosaic, in which the connection of the parts is a purely external one, and every transition an artificial juncture. The discourses in John present just the opposite appearance. Their gradual transitions, only occasionally rendered obscure by the mystical depths of meaning in which they lie—transitions in which one thought develops itself out of another, and a succeeding proposition is frequently but an explanatory amplification of the preceding one—are indicative of a pliable, unresisting mass, such as is never presented to a writer by the traditional sayings of another, but by such only as proceeds from the

[1] Leben Jesu, ii. 187.

stores of his own thought, which he moulds according to his will. For this reason the contributions of tradition to these stores of thought were not so likely to have been *particular independent sayings of Jesus, as rather certain ideas which formed the basis of many of his discourses*, and which were modified and developed according to the bent of a mind of Greek or Alexandrian culture."[1]

Another peculiarity of this gospel—arising, probably, out of its controversial origin—is its exaltation of dogma over morality—of belief over spiritual affection. In the other gospels, piety, charity, forgiveness of injuries, purity of life, are preached by Christ as the titles to his kingdom and his Father's favour. Whereas, in John's gospel, as in his epistles, belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Logos, is constantly represented as the one thing needful. The whole tone of the history bears token of a time when the message was beginning to be forgotten in the Messenger; when metaphysical and fruitless discussions as to the nature of Christ had superseded devotion to his spirit, and attention to the sublime piety and simple self-sacrificing holiness which formed the essence of his own teaching. The discourses are often touchingly eloquent and tender; the narrative is full of beauty, pathos, and nature; but we miss the simple and intelligible truth, the noble, yet practical, morality of the other histories; we find in it more of Christ than of Christianity, and more of John than of Jesus. If the work of an apostle at all, it was of an apostle who had only caught a small fragment of his Master's mantle, or in whom the good original seed had been choked by the long bad habit of subtle and scholastic controversies. We cannot but regard this gospel as decidedly inferior in moral sublimity and purity to the other representations of Christ's teaching which have come down to us; its religion is more of a dogmatic creed, and its very philanthropy has a narrower and more restricted character. We will give a few parallels to make our meaning clearer.

[1] See also Hennell, p. 200. "The picture of Jesus bequeathing his parting benedictions to the disciples, seems fully to warrant the idea that the author was one whose imagination and affections had received an impress from real scenes and real attachments. The few relics of the words, looks, and acts of Jesus, which friendship itself could at that time preserve unmixed, he expands into a complete record of his own and the disciples' sentiments; what they felt, he makes Jesus speak."

John xiii. 1. Now when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having *loved his own* which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

John xiii. 35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love *one to another.*

John xv. 12. This is my commandment, that *ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

John xvii. 9. I pray for them: *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me* out of the world (v. 20). Neither pray I for these alone, *but for them also which shall believe on me* through their word[1].

John iii. 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That *whosoever believeth on him* should not perish, but have eternal life.

John vi. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, *and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.*

John xvii. 3. And *this is life eternal*, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

John vi. 29. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Matth. v. 43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies*, bless them that curse you, *do good to them that hate you*, pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; . . . . for *if ye love them which love you, what reward have you?* do not even the publicans the same?

Luke x. 27. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—(Definition of a neighbour, as any one whom we can serve.)

Luke vi. 28. Pray for them which despitefully use you; bless them which persecute you.

Luke xxiii. 34. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Matth. v. 3, 8. Blessed are the poor in spirit, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Blessed are the pure in heart, *for they shall see God.*

Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,* shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; *but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Many will say unto me in that day, Lord Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

Matth. xix. 16, et seq. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good,

[1] I venture here to insert a note written by a friend to whom the MS. of this work was submitted for correction. "These passages are the growth of an age in which Christians were already suffering persecution. In such times a special and peculiar love to 'the brethren' is natural and desirable; without it they could not be animated to risk all that is needed for one another. I could not call it, at that time, a 'narrow philanthropy,' but it certainly does not belong to the same moral state, nor come forth from the same heart, at the same time, as that of the other Gospels. In the present day, however, the results are intensely evil: for this Gospel defines those who are to love another by an intellectual creed; and however this be enlarged or contracted, we have here the essence of Bigotry."

&c., &c., ; but if *thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, &c.

Matth. xxv. 31-46.—(Definition of Christ's reception of the wicked and the righteous.)—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the *righteous into life eternal.*

Mark xii. 28-34. And the Scribe answered, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth : for there is one God, and there is none other but he ; &c., &c. . . . . And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.*

Luke ix. 51-56. And when James and John saw this (that the Samaritans would not receive Jesus), they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, &c.

John iii. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life :* and *he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life;* but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Luke x. 25-28. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? He said unto him, What is written in the law ? How readest thou ? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast answered rightly : *this do, and thou shalt live.*

There are several minor peculiarities which distinguish this gospel from the preceding ones, which we can do no more than indicate. We find here little about the Kingdom of Heaven—nothing about Christ's mission being confined to the Israelites—nothing about the casting out of devils—nothing about the destruction of Jerusalem—nothing about the struggle between the law and gospel—topics which occupy so large a space in the picture of Christ's ministry given in the synoptical gospels ; and the omission of which seems to refer the composition of this narrative to a later period, when the Gentiles were admitted into the Church—when the idea of demoniacal possession had given way before a higher culture—when Jerusalem had been long destroyed

—and when Judaism had quite retired before Christianity, at least within the pale of the Church.[1]

Though we have seen ample reason to conclude that nearly all the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel are mainly the composition of the evangelist from memory or tradition, rather than the genuine utterances of our great Teacher, it may be satisfactory, as further confirmation, to select a few single passages and expressions, as to the unauthentic character of which there can be no question. Thus at ch. iii. 11, Jesus is represented as saying to Nicodemus, in the midst of his discourse about regeneration, "We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness,"—expressions wholly unmeaning and out of place in the mouth of Jesus on an occasion where he is testifying nothing at all, but merely propounding a mystical dogma to an auditor dull of comprehension—but expressions which are the evangelist's habitual form of asseveration and complaint.

It is not clear whether the writer intended verses 16–21 to form part of the discourse of Jesus, or merely a commentary of his own. If the former, they are clearly unwarrantable; their point of view is that of a period when the teaching of Christ had been known and rejected, and they could not have been uttered with any justice or appropriateness at the very commencement of his ministry.

Ch. xi. 8. "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?" *The Jews* is an expression which would be natural to Ephesians or other foreigners when speaking of the inhabitants of Palestine, but could not have been used by Jews speaking of their own countrymen. They would have said, the People, or, the Pharisees. The same observation applies to xiii. 33, and also probably to xviii. 36.

Ch. xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might

[1] Modern criticism has detected several slight errors and inaccuracies in the fourth gospel, such as Sychar for Sichem, Siloam erroneously interpreted *sent*, the killing of the passover represented as occurring on the wrong day, &c., &c., from which it has been argued that the writer could not have been a native of Palestine, and by consequence not the Apostle John. We think Bretschneider has made far too much of these trifles, while Hug's attempts to evade or neutralize them are, in our view, more ingenious and subtle than fair or creditable.

know Thee the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom Thou hast sent." This would be a natural expression for the evangelist, but not for his Master. We have no instance of Jesus speaking thus of himself in the third person, especially in an address to God.

As before observed, great doubt hangs over the whole story of the testimony borne by the Baptist to Jesus at his baptism. In the fourth evangelist, this testimony is represented as most emphatic, public, and repeated—so that it could have left no doubt in the minds of any of his followers, either as to the grandeur of the mission of Jesus, or as to his own subordinate character and position (i. 29–36; iii. 26–36). Yet we find, from Acts xviii. 25, and again xix. 3, circles of John the Baptist's disciples, who appear never even to have heard of Jesus—a statement which we think is justly held irreconcilable with the statements above referred to in the fourth gospel.

The question of miracles will be considered in a future chapter; but there is one miracle, peculiar to this gospel, of so singular and apocryphal a character as to call for notice here. The turning of water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee has long formed the opprobrium and perplexity of theologians, and must continue to do so as long as they persist in regarding it as an accurate historical relation. None of the numberless attempts to give anything like a probable explanation of the narrative has been attended with the least success. They are for the most part melancholy specimens of ingenuity misapplied, and plain honesty perverted by an originally false assumption. No portion of the gospel history, scarcely any portion of Old Testament, or even of apocryphal, narratives, bears such unmistakable marks of fiction. It is a story which, if found in any other volume, would at once have been dismissed as a clumsy and manifest invention. In the first place, it is a miracle wrought to supply more wine to men who had already drunk much—a deed which has no suitability to the character of Jesus, and no analogy to any other of his miracles. *Secondly*, though it was, as we are told, the first of his miracles, his mother is represented as expecting him to work a miracle, and to commence his public career with so unfit and impro-

bable a one. *Thirdly*, Jesus is said to have spoken harshly[1] to his mother, asking her what they had in common, and telling her that "his hour (for working miracles) was not yet come," when he knew that it *was* come. *Fourthly*, in spite of this rebuff, Mary is represented as still expecting a miracle, and *this particular one*, and as making preparation for it: "She saith to the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it;" and accordingly Jesus immediately began to give orders to them. *Fifthly*, the superior quality of the wine, and the enormous quantity produced (135 gallons, or, in our language, above 43 dozen[2]) are obviously fabulous. And those who are familiar with the apocryphal gospels will have no difficulty in recognising the close consanguinity between the whole narrative and the stories of miracles with which they abound. It is perfectly hopeless, as well as mischievous, to endeavour to retain it as a portion of authentic history.

[1] All attempts at explanation have failed to remove this character from the expression: *γύναι τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί.*

[2] See the calculation in Hennell, and in Strauss, ii. 432. The *μετρητὴς* is supposed to correspond to the Hebrew *bath*, which was equal to 1½ Roman amphora, or 8·7 gallons; the whole quantity would therefore be from 104 to 156 gallons.

CHAPTER XI.

RESULTS OF THE FOREGOING CRITICISM.

THE conclusion at which we have arrived in the foregoing chapters is of vital moment, and deserves to be fully developed. When duly wrought out it will be found the means of extricating Religion from Orthodoxy—of rescuing Christianity from Calvinism. We have seen that the Gospels, while they give a fair and faithful *outline* of Christ's character and teaching—the Synoptical gospels at least—fill up that outline with much that is not authentic;—that many of the statements therein related are not historical, but mystical or legendary;—and that much of the language ascribed to Jesus was never uttered by him, but originated either with the Evangelists themselves, or more frequently in the traditional stores from which they drew their materials. We cannot, indeed, say in all cases, nor even in most cases, *with certainty*—in many we cannot even pronounce with any very strong *probability*—that such and such particular expressions or discourses are, or are not the genuine utterances of Christ. With respect to some, we can say with confidence, that they are *not* from him; with respect to others, we can say with almost equal confidence, that they are his actual words;—but with regard to the majority of passages, this certainty is not attainable. But as we *know* that much did not proceed from Jesus—that much is unhistorical and ungenuine—we are entitled to conclude—we are even *forced*, by the very instinct of our reasoning faculty, to conclude—that the unhistorical and ungenuine passages are those in which Jesus is represented as speaking and acting in a manner unconformable to his character as other-

wise delineated, irreconcilable with the tenour of his teaching as elsewhere described, and at variance with those grand philosophic and spiritual truths which have commanded the assent of all disciplined and comprehensive minds, and which could not have escaped an intellect so just, wide, penetrating, and profound, as that of our great Teacher.

Most reflecting minds rise from a perusal of the gospel history with a clear, broad, vivid conception of the character and mission of Christ, notwithstanding the many passages at which they have stumbled, and which they have felt—perhaps with needless alarm and self-reproach—to be incongruous and unharmonizing with the great whole. The question naturally arises, Did these incongruities and inconsistencies really exist in Christ himself? or, are they the result of the imperfect and unhistorical condition in which his biography has been transmitted to us? The answer, it seems to us, ought to be this:—We cannot *prove*, it is true, that some of these unsuitabilities did not exist in Christ himself, but we have shown that many of them belong to the history, not to the subject of the history, and it is only fair, therefore, in the absence of contrary evidence, to conclude that the others also are due to the same origin.

Now the peculiar, startling, perplexing, revolting, and contradictory doctrines of modern orthodoxy—so far as they have originated from or are justified by the Gospels at all—have originated from, or are justified by, not the general tenour of Christ's character and preaching, *but those single, unharmonizing, discrepant texts of which we have been speaking*. Doctrines, which unsophisticated men feel to be horrible and monstrous, and which those who hold them most devotedly, secretly admit to be fearful and perplexing, are founded on particular passages which contradict the *generality* of Christ's teaching, but which, being attributed to him by the evangelists, have been regarded as endowed with an authority which it would be profane and dangerous to resist. In showing, therefore, that several of these passages did not emanate from Christ, and that in all probability none of them did, we conceive that we shall have rendered a vast service to the cause of true religion, and to those numerous individuals in whose tortured minds sense and conscience have long struggled for the

mastery. We will elucidate this matter by a few specifications.[1]

One of the most untenable, unphilosophical, uncharitable doctrines of the orthodox creed—one most peculiarly stamped with the impress of the bad passions of humanity—is, that *belief* (by which is generally signified belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, a Teacher sent down from Heaven on a special mission to redeem mankind) *is essential, and the one thing essential, to Salvation.* The source of this doctrine must doubtless be sought for in that intolerance of opposition unhappily so common among men, and in that tendency to ascribe bad motives to those who arrive at different conclusions from themselves, which prevails so generally among the unchastened minds of Theologians. But it cannot be denied that the gospels contain many texts which clearly affirm and fully justify a doctrine so untenable and harsh. Let us turn to a few of these, and inquire into the degree of authenticity to which they are probably entitled.

The most specific assertion of the tenet in question, couched in that positive, terse, sententious, damnatory language so dear to orthodox divines, is *found in the spurious portion of the gospel of Mark* (c. xvi. 16[2]), and is there by the writer, whoever he was, unscrupulously put into the mouth of Jesus after his resurrection. In the synoptical gospels may be found a few texts which may be wrested to *support* the doctrine, but there are none which teach it. But when we come to the fourth gospel we find several passages similar to that in Mark,[3] proclaiming Salvation to believers, and damnation, or something approaching it, to unbelievers, *but all in the peculiar style and spirit of the Author of the first Epistle of John*, which abounds in denunciations precisely similar[4] (but directed, it is remarkable,

[1] It is true that many of the doctrines in question had not a scriptural origin at all, but an ecclesiastical one; and, when originated, were defended by texts from the *epistles*, rather than the *gospels*. The authority of the epistles we shall consider in a subsequent chapter, but if in the meantime we can show that those doctrines have no foundation in the language of Christ, the *chief* obstacle to the renunciation of them is removed.

[2] "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," a passage which, were it not happily spurious, would suffice to "damn" the book which contains it.

[3] John iii. 16, 18, 36; v. 24; vi. 29, 40, 47; xi. 25, 26; xx. 31.

[4] 1 John ii. 19, 22, 23; iv. 2, 3, 6, 15; v. 1, 5, 10, 12, 13.

apparently against heretics, not against infidels, against those who believe amiss, not against those who do not believe at all)—all, too, redolent of the temper of that Apostle who wished to call down fire from heaven on an unbelieving village, and *who was rebuked by Jesus for the savage and presumptuous suggestion.*

In the last chapter we have shown that the *style* of these passages is of a nature to point to John, and not to Jesus, as their author, and that the *spirit* of them is entirely hostile and incompatible with the language of Jesus in other parts more obviously faithful. It appears, therefore, that the passages confirmatory of the doctrine in question are found exclusively in a portion of the synoptists which is certainly spurious, and in portions of the fourth gospel which are almost certainly unhistorical; and that they are contradicted by other passages in all the gospels. It only remains to show that as the doctrine is at variance with the spirit of the mild and benevolent Jesus, so it is too obviously unsound not to have been recognised as such by one whose profound and splendid genius was informed and enlightened by so pure a heart.

In the first place, Christ must have known that the same doctrine will be presented in a very different manner, and with very different degrees of evidence for its truth, by different preachers; so much so that to *resist* the arguments of one preacher would imply either dulness of comprehension or obstinate and wilful blindness, while to *yield* to the arguments of his colleague would imply weakness of understanding or instability of purpose. The same doctrine may be presented and defended by one preacher so clearly, rationally, and forcibly that all sensible men (idiosyncracies apart) must accept it, and by another preacher so feebly, corruptly, and confusedly, that all sensible men must reject it. The rejection of the Christianity preached by Luther, and of the Christianity preached by Tetzel—of the Christianity preached by Loyola and Dunstan, and of the Christianity preached by Oberlin and Pascal—cannot have been worthy of the same condemnation. Few Protestants, and no Catholics, will deny that Christianity *has been* so presented to men as to make it a simple affair both of sense and virtue to reject it. To represent, therefore, the reception of a doctrine as a matter of merit, or its rejection as a matter

of blame, *without reference to the consideration how and by whom it is preached,* is to leave out the main element of judgment—an error which could not have been committed by the just and wise Jesus.

Further. The doctrine and the passages in question ascribe to "belief" the highest degree of merit, and the sublimest conceivable reward—"eternal life;" and to "disbelief," the deepest wickedness, and the most fearful penalty, "damnation," and "the wrath of God." Now, here we have a logical error, betraying a confusion of intellect which *we* scruple to ascribe to Jesus. Belief is an effect produced by a cause. It is a condition of the mind induced by the operation of evidence presented. Being, therefore, an *effect,* and not an *act,* it cannot be, or have, a merit. The moment it becomes a voluntary act (*and therefore a thing of which merit can be predicated*) it ceases to be genuine—it is then brought about (if it be not an abuse of language to name this state "belief") by the will of the individual, not by the *bonâ fide* operation of evidence upon his mind—which brings us to the *reductio ad absurdum,* that belief can only become meritorious by ceasing to be honest.

In sane and competent minds, if the evidence presented is sufficient, belief will follow as a necessary consequence—if it does not follow, this can only arise from the evidence adduced being insufficient—and in such case to pretend belief, or to attempt belief, would be a forfeiture of mental integrity; and cannot therefore be meritorious, but the reverse. To disbelieve in spite of adequate proof, is impossible—to believe without adequate proof, is weak or dishonest. Belief, therefore, can only become meritorious by becoming sinful—can only become a fit subject for reward by becoming a fit subject for punishment. Such is the sophism involved in the dogma we have dared to put into Christ's mouth, and to announce on his authority.

But, it will be urged, the disbelief which Christ blamed and menaced with punishment was (as appears from John iii. 19) the disbelief implied in a wilful rejection of his claims, or a refusal to examine them—a love of darkness in preference to light. If so, the language employed is incorrect and deceptive, and the blame is predicated of an effect instead of a cause—it is *meant* of a voluntary action, but it is *predicated* of a specified and denounced consequence which is no natural or logical indication of that

voluntary action, but may arise from independent causes. The moralist who should denounce gout as a sin, meaning the sinfulness to apply to the excesses of which gout is *often, but by no means always*, a consequence and an indication, would be held to be a very confused teacher and inaccurate logician. Moreover, this is not the sense attached to the doctrine by orthodox divines in common parlance. And the fact still remains that Christ is represented as rewarding by eternal felicity a state of mind which, *if honestly attained*, is inevitable, involuntary, and therefore in no way a fitting subject for reward, and which, if not honestly attained, is hollow, fallacious, and deserving of punishment rather than of recompense.

We are aware that the orthodox seek to escape from the dilemma, by asserting that belief results from the state of the heart, and that if this be right belief will inevitably follow. This is simply false in fact. How many excellent, virtuous, and humble minds, in all ages, have been *anxious*, but unable to believe—have prayed earnestly for belief, and suffered bitterly for disbelief—in vain!

The dogma of the Divinity, or, as it is called in the technical language of polemics, *the proper Deity*, of Christ, though historically proveable to have had an ecclesiastical, not an evangelical, origin—and though clearly negatived by the whole tenour of the synoptical gospels, and even by some passages in the fourth gospel—can yet appeal to several isolated portions and texts, as suggesting and confirming, if not asserting it. On close examination, however, it will be seen that all these passages are to be found either in the fourth gospel—which we have already shown reason to conclude is throughout an unscrupulous and most inexact paraphrase of Christ's teaching—or in those portions of the three first gospels which, on other accounts and from independent trains of argument, have been selected as at least of questionable authenticity. It is true that the doctrine in question is now chiefly defended by reference to the Epistles; but at the same time it would scarcely be held so tenaciously by the orthodox if it were found to be wholly destitute of *evangelical* support. Now, the passages which appear most confirmatory of Christ's Deity, or Divine Nature, are, in the first place, the narratives of the Incarnation, or the miraculous Conception, as given by Matthew and Luke. We have already entered pretty fully into the consideration of the au-

thenticity of these portions of Scripture, and have seen that we may almost with certainty pronounce them to be fabulous, or mythical. The two narratives do not harmonize with each other; they neutralize and negative the genealogies on which depended so large a portion of the proof of Jesus being the Messiah;[1]—the marvellous statement they contain is not referred to in any subsequent portion of the two gospels, and is tacitly but positively negatived by several passages—it is never mentioned in the Acts or in the Epistles, and was evidently unknown to all the Apostles—and, finally, the tone of the narrative, especially in Luke, is poetical and legendary, and bears a marked similarity to the stories contained in the apocryphal gospels.

The only other expressions in the three first gospels which lend the slightest countenance to the doctrine in question, are the acknowledgments of the disciples, the centurion, and the demoniacs, that Jesus was the Son of God[2],—some of which we have already shown to be of very questionable genuineness,—and the voice from heaven said to have been heard at the baptism and the transfiguration, saying, "This is my beloved Son," &c. But, besides that, as shown in chapter vii., considerable doubt rests on the accuracy of the first of these relations: the testimony borne by the heavenly voice to Jesus can in no sense mean that he was *physically* the Son of God, or a partaker of the divine nature, inasmuch as the very same expression was frequently applied to others, and as indeed a "Son of God" was, in the common parlance of the Jews, simply a prophet, a man whom God had sent, or to whom he had spoken[3].

[1] The Messiah must, according to Jewish prophecy, be a lineal descendant of David: this Christ was, according to the genealogies: this he was not, if the miraculous conception be a fact. If, therefore, Jesus came into being as Matthew and Luke affirm, we do not see how he could have been the Messiah.

[2] An expression here merely signifying a Prophet, or the Messiah.

[3] "The Lord hath said unto me (David), Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."—(Ps. ii. 7.) Jehovah says of Solomon, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."—(2 Sam. vii. 14.) The same expression is applied to Israel (Exod. iv. 22. Hos. xi. 1), and to David (Ps. lxxxix. 27). "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High."—(Ps. lxxxii. 6.) "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came," &c.—(John x. 35.) "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God. . . . . Beloved, now are we the Sons of God."—(1 John iii. 1, 2.) (See also Gal. iii. 26; iv. 5, 6.) "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."—(Rom. viii. 14.) "But to as many as received him, he gave power to become the Sons of God."—(John i. 12.)

But when we come to the fourth gospel, especially to those portions of it whose peculiar style betrays that they came from John, and not from Jesus, the case is very different. We find here many passages evidently intended to convey the impression that Jesus was endowed with a super-human nature, but nearly all expressed in language savouring less of Christian simplicity than of Alexandrian philosophy. The Evangelist commences his gospel with a confused statement of the Platonic doctrine as modified in Alexandria, and that the Logos was a partaker of the Divine Nature, and was the Creator of the world; on which he proceeds to engraft his own notion, that Jesus was this Logos—that the Logos or the divine wisdom, the second person in Plato's Trinity, became flesh in the person of the prophet of Nazareth. Now, can any one read the epistles, or the three first gospels —or even the whole of the fourth—and not at once repudiate the notion that Jesus was, and knew himself to be, the Creator of the World?—which John affirms him to have been. Throughout this gospel we find constant repetitions of the same endeavour to make out a super-human nature for Christ; but the ungenuineness of these passages has already been fully considered.

Once more: the doctrine of the Atonement, of Christ's death having been a sacrifice in expiation of the sins of mankind, is the keystone of modern orthodoxy. It takes its origin from the epistles, but we believe can only appeal to *three* texts in the evangelists, for even partial confirmamation. In Matth. xx. 28, it is said, "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life *a ransom for many*," an expression which may *countenance* the doctrine, but assuredly does not contain it. Again in Matth. xxvi. 28, we find, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*." Mark (xiv. 24) and Luke (xxi. 20), however, who give the same sentence, *both omit the significant expression*. In the fourth gospel, John the Baptist is represented as saying of Jesus (i. 29), "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," an expression which may be intended to convey the doctrine, but which occurs in what we have already shown to be about the most apocryphal portion of the whole gospel.

In fine, then, we arrive at this irresistible conclusion;—

that, knowing many passages in the evangelists to be unauthentic, and having reason to suspect the authenticity of many others, and not being able with absolute certainty to point to any which are perfectly and indubitably authentic—the probability *in favour* of the fidelity of any of the texts relied on to prove the peculiar and perplexing doctrines of modern orthodoxy, is far inferior to the probability *against* the truth of those doctrines. A doctrine perplexing to our reason and painful to our feelings *may* be from God; but in this case the proof of its being from God must be proportionally clear and irrefragable; the assertion of it in a narrative which does not scruple to attribute to God's Messenger words which he never uttered, is not only no proof, but does not even amount to a presumption. There is no text in the evangelists, the divine (or Christian) origin of which is sufficiently unquestionable to enable it to serve as the foundation of doctrines repugnant to natural feeling or to common sense.

But, it will be objected, if these conclusions are sound, absolute uncertainty is thrown over the whole gospel history, and over all Christ's teaching. To this we reply, *in limine*, in the language of Algernon Sydney, "No consequence can destroy any truth;"—the sole matter for consideration is, Are our arguments correct?—not, Do they lead to a result which is embarrassing and unwelcome?

But the inference is excessive;—the premises do not reach so far. The uncertainty thrown is not over the main points of Christ's history, which, after all its retrenchments, still stands out an intelligible though a skeleton account—not over the grand features, the pervading tone, of his doctrines or his character, which still present to us a clear, consistent, and splendid delineation;—but over those individual statements, passages, and discourses, which mar this delineation—which break its unity—which destroy its consistency—which cloud its clearness—which tarnish its beauty. The gain to us seems immense. It is true, we have no longer *absolute* certainty with regard to any one especial text or scene: such is neither necessary nor attainable;—it is true that, instead of passively accepting the whole heterogeneous and indigestible mass, we must, by the careful and conscientious exercise of those faculties with which we are endowed, by ratiocination and moral tact, separate what Christ did, from

what he did not teach, as best we may. But the task will be difficult to those only who look in the gospels for a minute, dogmatic, and sententious creed—not to those who seek only to learn Christ's spirit, that they may imbibe it, and to comprehend his views of virtue and of God, that they may draw strength and consolation from those fountains of living water [1].

[1] "The character of the record is such that I see not how any great stress can be laid on particular actions attributed to Jesus. That he lived a divine life, suffered a violent death, taught and lived a most beautiful religion—this seems the great fact about which a mass of truth and error has been collected."—Theodore Parker, Discourse, p. 188.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LIMITS OF APOSTOLIC WISDOM AND AUTHORITY.

We now come to the very important question—as to the amount of authority which belongs to the teaching of the Apostles. Are they to be implicitly relied on as having fully imbibed Christ's spirit? and as faithful, competent, infallible expounders of his doctrine? May we, in a word, regard their teaching as the teaching of Jesus himself?

What their teaching was we know with perfect certainty, though not with all the fulness that might be desired. We have the teaching itself in the epistles, and a record of it in the Acts.

The latter work is not perfectly to be relied on. It conveys a vivid, and on the whole, in all probability, a faithful, picture of the formation of the early Christian Churches, their sufferings, their struggles, their proceedings, and the spirit which animated them;—and, being written by a participator in those events, and a companion of Paul[1] through a portion of his missionary wanderings, must be regarded as *mainly* historical; and we shall, therefore, make use of the narrative with considerable confidence. But, as a source for discovering the special doctrines preached by the Apostles, it is of questionable safety, inasmuch as the writer evidently allowed himself the freedom indulged in by all historians of antiquity—of composing speeches in the names of his actors;

[1] Luke is generally considered to be the same as Silas. It is remarked that when Silas is represented in the narrative as being with Paul, the narrator speaks in the first person plural. "We came to Samothrace," &c., &c., xvi. 11. Romans xvi. 21. Col. iv. 14. 2 Thess. i. 1. 2 Timothy iv. 11. Philemon, verse 24.

—and thus the discourses, both of Paul and Peter, can only be regarded as proceeding from Luke himself, containing, probably, much that *was* said, but much, also, that was only fitting to have been said, on such occasions.

We have already adduced one unmistakable instance of this practice in a previous chapter, where Luke not only gives the speech of Gamaliel in a secret Council of the Sanhedrim, from which the Apostles were expressly excluded[1], but makes him refer, in the past tense, to an event which did not take place till some years after the speech was delivered. In the same way we have long discourses delivered by Stephen, Peter, and Paul, at some of which Luke *may* have been present, but which it is impossible he should have remembered verbatim ;—we have the same invalid argument regarding the resurrection of Christ put into the mouths of two such opposite characters as Peter and Paul (ii. 27 ; xiii. 35) ;—we have another account of a conversation in a *secret* Council of the Jews (iv. 15–17) ;—we have the beautiful oration of Paul at Athens, when we know that he was quite alone (xvii. 14, 15) ;—we have the *private* conversation of the Ephesian craftsmen, when conspiring against the Apostles (xix. 25, 27) ;—we have the *private* letter of the Chief Captain Lysias to Felix (xxiii. 26) ;—we have two *private* conversations between Festus and Agrippa about Paul (xxv. 14–22, and xxvi. 31, 32) ;—and all these are given in precisely the style and manner of an ear-witness. We cannot, therefore, feel certain that any particular discourses or expressions attributed by Luke to the Apostles were really, genuinely, and *unalteredly*, theirs. In the Epistles, however, they speak for themselves, and so far there can be no mistake as to the doctrines they believed and taught.

Before proceeding further we wish to premise one remark. The Epistles contained in our Canon are *twenty-one* in number, viz. 14 of Paul (including the Hebrews), 3 of John, 2 of Peter, 1 of James, and 1 of Jude. But the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews is more than doubtful ; the second of Peter, the second and third of John, and even those of James and Jude, were at a very early period reck-

[1] Acts v. 34.

oned among the spurious or doubtful writings[1]. The epistles of certain or *acknowledged* genuineness are thus reduced to *fifteen*, viz. 13 of Paul, 1 of John, and 1 of Peter.

Thus, of fifteen epistles, of which we can pronounce with tolerable certainty that they are of apostolic origin, 2 only proceeded from the companions of Jesus, and the remaining 13 from a man who had never seen him, save in a vision, nor heard his teaching, nor learnt from his disciples;—a converted persecutor, who boasted that he received his instructions from direct supernatural communications[2].

We will now proceed to establish the following propositions:—

I. That the Apostles differed from each other in opinion, and disagreed among themselves.

II. That they held and taught some opinions which we know to have been erroneous.

III. That both in their general tone, and in some important particulars, their teaching differed materially from that of Christ as depicted in the synoptical gospels.

I. Infallible expounders of a system of Religion or Philosophy cannot disagree among themselves as to the doctrines which compose that system, nor as to the spirit which should pervade it. Now, the Apostles did disagree among themselves in their exposition of the nature and constituents of their Master's system—and this, too, in matters of no small significance: they are not, therefore, infallible or certain guides.

Putting aside personal and angry contentions, such as those recorded in Acts xv. 39, which, however undignified, are, we fear, natural even to holy men;—the first recorded dispute among the Apostles we find to have related to a matter of the most essential importance to the character of Christianity—viz. whether or not the Gospel should be preached to any but Jews—whether the Gentiles were to be admitted into the fold of Christ? We find (c. xi.) that when the Apostles and brethren in Judea heard that Peter had ventured to visit Gentiles, to eat with them, to preach

[1] De Wette, i. 69–83. See also Hug, 583–650. The epistle of James we are still disposed to consider genuine; that of Jude is unimportant; the second of Peter, and the third of John, are almost certainly spurious.

[2] Galatians i. 11–19.

to them, and even to baptize them, they were astonished and scandalised by the innovation, and "contended with him." The account of the discussion which ensued throws light upon two very interesting questions;—upon the views entertained by Jesus himself (or at least as to those conveyed by him to his disciples), as to the range and limit of his mission;—and upon the manner in which, and the grounds on which, controversies were decided in the early Church.

We have been taught to regard Jesus as a prophet who announced himself as sent from God on a mission to preach repentance, and to teach the way of life to all mankind, and who left behind him the Apostles to complete the work which he was compelled to leave unfinished. The mission of Moses was to separate and educate a peculiar people, apart from the rest of the world, for the knowledge and worship of the one true God:—The mission of Christ was to bring all nations to that knowledge and worship—to extend to all mankind that Salvation which, in his time, was considered to belong to the Jews alone, as well as to point to a better and a wider way of life. Such is the popular and established notion. But when we look into the New Testament we find little to confirm this view, and much to negative it. Putting aside our own prepossessions, and inferences drawn from the character of Christ, and the comprehensive grandeur of his doctrine, nothing can well be clearer from the evidence presented to us in the Scriptures, than that Jesus considered himself sent, not so much to the world at large, as to the Jews exclusively,—to bring back his countrymen to the true essence and spirit of that religion whose purity had in his days been so grievously corrupted; and to elevate and enlarge their views from the stores of his own rich and comprehensive mind.

It will be allowed by all that the Apostles, at the commencement of their ministry after the crucifixion of their Lord, had not the least idea that their mission extended to any but the Jews, or that their Master was anything but a Jewish Messiah and Deliverer. Their first impatient question to him when assembled together after the resurrection, is said to have been, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"[1] The whole of the account we are

[1] Acts i, 6.

now considering, brings out in strong relief their notions as to the narrow limits of their ministry. When Peter is sent for by Cornelius, and hears the relation of his vision, he exclaims, as if a perfectly new idea had struck him, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts x. 34); and he goes on to expound "the word which God sent to *the children of Israel*" (v. 36), and which the Apostles were commanded to "preach to the people," (v. 42)—"the people," as the context (v. 41) shows, meaning simply the Jews. The Jewish believers, we are told (v. 45), "as many as came with Peter, were astonished, *because that on the Gentiles also* was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." When Peter was called to account by the other Apostles for having preached to and baptized Gentiles (xi. 1)—a proceeding which evidently (xi. 2, 3,) shocked and surprised them all,—he justified himself, not by reference to any commands of Jesus, not by quoting precept or example of his Master, but simply by relating a vision or dream which he supposed to proceed from a divine suggestion. The defence appeared valid to the brethren, and they inferred from it, in a manner which shows what a new and unexpected light had broken in upon them,—"*Then* hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (xi. 18). Now, could this have been the case, had Christ given his disciples any commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, or given them the slightest reason to suppose that other nations besides the Jews were included in that commission? (See also for confirmation xi. 19, and xiii. 46.) It is to be observed also that throughout the elaborate arguments contained in the Epistle to the Romans, to show that the gospel *ought* to be preached to the Gentiles—that there is no difference between Greek and Jew, &c.—Paul, though he quotes largely from the Hebrew Prophets, *never appeals to any sayings of Jesus*, in confirmation of his view;—and in the Acts, in two instances, his mission to the Gentiles is represented as arising out of a direct subsequent revelation (in a vision) to himself. (Acts xxii. 21; xxvi. 17; ix. 15.)

As, therefore, none of the Apostles, either in their writings or in their discussions, appeal to the sayings or deeds of Christ during his lifetime as their warrant for

preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, but on the contrary, one and all manifest a total ignorance of any such deeds or sayings—we think it must be concluded that the various texts extant, conveying his commands to "preach the gospel to all nations," could never have proceeded from him, but are to be ranked among the many *ascribed* sayings, embodying the ideas of a later period, which we find both in the Acts and the evangelists[1]. None of these are quoted or referred to by the Apostles in their justification, and therefore could not have been known to them, and, since unknown, could not be authentic.

On the other hand, there are several passages in the gospels which, if genuine (as they appear to be), clearly indicate that it was not from any neglect or misunderstanding of the instructions of their Lord, that the Apostles regarded their mission as confined to the Jews. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matth. x. 5, 6). "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matth. xv. 24). "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matth. xix. 28). "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke xvi. 17). "Think not I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matth. v. 17). "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke xix. 9). "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv. 22).

[1] These texts are the following (Matth. viii. 11, 12): "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness." This, however, as well as the parable of the vineyard (xxi. 43), and that of the supper (Luke xiv. 16), might be merely an indignant denunciation called forth by the obstinacy of the Jews in refusing to listen to his claims. Matth. xxiv. 14, xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15, we have already shown reason to believe spurious; and Luke xxiv. 47, with Acts i. 8, bear equal marks of unauthenticity. It is true that Jesus talked with a Samaritan woman, and healed a Samaritan leper; but the Samaritans were not Gentiles, only heretical Jews. We find from Acts viii. 5, 14, that the Apostles early and without scruple preached to and baptized *Samaritans*. Jesus also healed a Gentile centurion's servant: but in the first place, the servant might have been a Jew, though his Master was not: and, secondly, a temporal blessing, a simple act of charity, Jesus could not grudge even to strangers.

It would appear, then, that neither the historical nor the epistolary Scriptures give us any reason for surmising that Jesus directed, or contemplated, the spread of his gospel beyond the pale of the Jewish nation;—that the Apostles at least had no cognizance of any such views on his part;—that when the question of the admission of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the gospel, came before them in the natural progress of events, it created considerable difference of opinion among them, and at first the majority were decidedly hostile to any such liberality of view, or such extension of their missionary labours. The mode in which the controversy was conducted, and the grounds on which it was decided, are strongly characteristic of the moral and intellectual condition of the struggling Church at that early period. The objectors bring no argument to show why the Gentiles should *not* be admitted to the gospel light, but they put Peter at once on his defence, as having, in preaching to others than to Jews, done a thing which, *primâ facie*, was out of rule, and required justification. And Peter replies to them, not by appeals to the paramount authority of Christ,—not by reference to the tenour of his life and teaching,—not by citing the case of the Centurion's servant, or the Canaanitish woman, or the parables of the vineyard and the supper,—not by showing from the nature and fitness of things that so splendid a plan of moral elevation, of instruction—such a comprehensive scheme of redemption, according to the orthodox view—ought to be as widely preached as possible,—not by arguing that Christ had come into the world to spread the healing knowledge of Jehovah, of our God and Father, to all nations, to save all sinners and all believers;—but simply by relating a vision, or rather a dream—the most natural one possible to a man as hungry as Peter is represented to have been—the interpretation of which—*at first a puzzle to him*—is suggested by the simultaneous appearance of the messengers of Cornelius, who also pleads a heavenly vision as a reason for the summons. This justification would scarcely by itself have been sufficient, for the dream might have meant nothing at all, or Peter's interpretation of it—evidently a doubtful and *tentative* one—might have been erroneous;—so he goes on to argue that the event showed him to have been right, inasmuch as, after his preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon all

the household of Cornelius: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning; . . . . forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts xi. 15, 17). This argument clenched the matter, satisfied the brethren, and settled, once for all, the question as to the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to inquire more closely into the nature of this argument which appeared to the Apostles so conclusive and irrefragable. What was this Holy Spirit? and in what way did it manifest its presence? so that the Apostles recognized it at once as the special and most peculiar gift vouchsafed to believers.

The case, as far as the Acts and the Epistles enable us to learn it, appears clearly to have been this:—The indication —or at least the most common, specific, and indubitable indication—of the Holy Spirit having fallen upon any one, was his beginning to "speak with tongues," to utter strange exclamations, unknown words, or words in an unknown tongue. Thus, in the case of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, we are told, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and *began to speak with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts ii. 4). Again, in the case of the household of Cornelius, "And they . . . . . were astonished . . . . . because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. *For they heard them speak with tongues*, and magnify God" (x. 45, 46). The same indication appeared also in the case of the disciples of the Baptist, whom Paul found at Ephesus: "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; *and they spake with tongues*, and prophesied" (xix. 6). The "speaking with tongues" (to which in the last instance is added "prophesying," or preaching) is the only specified external manifestation, cognizable by the senses, by which it was known that such and such individuals had received the Holy Ghost. What, then, was this "speaking with tongues?"[1]

[1] See also the passage in the spurious addition to Mark's Gospel (xvi. 17). "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; *they shall speak with new tongues*," &c. The date at which this interpolation was written is unknown, but it serves to show that, at that period, speaking with new tongues was one of the established signs of belief.

The popular idea is, that it was the power of speaking foreign languages without having learned them—supernaturally, in fact. This interpretation derives countenance, and probably its foundation, from the statement of Luke (Acts ii. 2-8), which is considered to intimate that the Apostles preached to each man of their vast and motley audience in his own native language. But there are many difficulties in the way of this interpretation, and much reason to suspect in the whole narrative a large admixture of the mythic element.

1. We have already seen that Luke is not to be implicitly trusted as an historian; and some remarkable discrepancies between the accounts of the Gospels and the Acts will be noted in a subsequent chapter, when we treat of the Resurrection and Ascension.

2. It appears from Matthew (x. 1, 8, 20), that the Holy Spirit had been already imparted to the Apostles during the lifetime of Jesus, and a second outpouring therefore could not be required. John, however, tells us (xx. 20), that Jesus expressly and *personally* conferred this gift after his resurrection, but *before his ascension:* "And when he had said this, he *breathed* on them, and saith unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" But in the Acts, the "breathing" had become "a rushing mighty wind," and the outpouring of the Spirit is placed some days *after the ascension*, and the personal interposition is dispensed with. These discrepant accounts cannot all be faithful, and for obvious reasons we think that of Luke least authentic.

3. We have no evidence anywhere that the Apostles knew, or employed, any language except Hebrew and Greek—Greek being (as Hug has clearly proved[1]) the common language in use throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Nay, we have *some* reason to believe that they were *not* acquainted with other languages; for by the general tradition of the early Church[2], Mark is called the "interpreter" of Peter. Now, if Peter had been gifted as we imagine on the day of Pentecost, he would have needed no interpreter.

[1] Hug, ii. 1, § 10, p. 326.

[2] Papias, Irenæus, and Jerome all call him so. See Eusebius.

4. If the knowledge of foreign languages[1], possessed by the Apostles, were the work of the Holy Spirit, the work was most imperfectly done (a monstrous conception), for, by universal consent, their Greek was a bald, barbarous, and incorrect idiom.

5. The language in which the occurrence is related would seem to imply that the miracle was wrought upon the hearers, rather than on the speakers—that whatever the language in which the Apostles *spoke*, the audience *heard* them each man in his own. "When the multitude came together they were confounded, because that *every man heard them speak in his own language.*" . . . . . "Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how *hear we every man in our own tongue*, wherein we were born?" The supposition that the different Apostles addressed different audiences in different languages, successively, is inconsistent with the text, which clearly indicates that the whole was one transaction, and took place at one time. "Peter standing up . . . . . said . . . . . These are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing *it is but the third hour of the day.*"

6. The people, we are told, "were in doubt" at the strange and incomprehensible phenomenon, and said, "What meaneth this?" while others thought the Apostles must be drunk—a natural perplexity and surmise, if the utterances were incoherent and unintelligible ejaculations—but not so, if they were discourses addressed to each set of foreigners in their respective languages. Moreover, Peter's defence is not what it would have been in the latter case. He does not say, "We have been endowed from on high with the power of speaking foreign languages which we have never learned: we are, as you say, ignorant Galilæans, but God has given

[1] Another consideration which renders the story still more doubtful is, that it appears very probable that Greek, though not always the native, was the current language, or a current language, among all those nations enumerated (verse 9–11). Media, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Arabia, and Egypt were full of Greek cities, and Greek was generally spoken there. (See the dissertation of Hug, above referred to.) If therefore the Apostles had addressed the audience in Greek, as it was probably their habit to do, they would naturally have been intelligible even to that miscellaneous audience. Acts xxii. 2, shows that even in Jerusalem addressing the people in Hebrew was an unusual thing.

us this faculty that we might tell you of his Son;"—but he assures them that those utterances which led them to suppose him and his fellow-disciples to be drunk were the consequences of that outpouring of spiritual emotion which had been prophesied as one of the concomitants of the millennium. "This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith Jehovah, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

7. Luke indicates in several passages, that in the other cases mentioned the Holy Spirit fell upon the recipients *in the same manner, and with the same results*, as on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts x. 47; xi. 15–17; xv. 8, 9[1]). Now, in these cases there is no reason whatever to believe that the "gift of tongues" meant the power of speaking foreign languages. In the first case (that of Cornelius) it could not have been this; for as all the recipients began to "speak with tongues," and yet were members of one household, such an unnecessary display of newly-acquired knowledge or powers would have been in the highest degree impertinent and ostentatious.

There can, we think, be no doubt—indeed we are not aware that any doubt has ever been expressed—that the remarks of Paul in the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters of the first epistle to the Corinthians, respecting the "speaking with tongues,"—the "gift of tongues,"—"the unknown tongue," &c.,—refer to the same faculty, or supposed spiritual endowment, spoken of in the Acts; which fell on the Apostles at the day of Pentecost, and on the household of Cornelius, and the disciples of Apollos, as already cited. The identity of the gift referred to in all the cases is, we believe, unquestioned. Now the language of Paul clearly shows, that this "speaking with tongues" was not preaching in a *foreign* language, but in an *unknown* language;—that it consisted of unintelligible, and probably incoherent,

[1] Peter says, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost *as well as we?*" . . . "The Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us at the beginning*." . . . . . "Forasmuch, then, as God *gave them the like gift as unto us*." . . . . "And God gave them the Holy Ghost, *even as unto us, and put no difference between us and them.*"

utterances[1]. He repeatedly distinguishes the gift of tongues from that of preaching (or, as it is there called, prophesy), and the gift of speaking the unknown tongues from the gift of interpreting the same. "To one is given by the Spirit . . . . . the working of miracles; to another prophesy; to another *divers kinds of tongues;* to another *the interpretation of tongues.*" . . . . . "Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" (1 Cor. xii. 10–30. See also xiii. 1, 2, 8.) "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret" (xiv. 13). Again, he classes this power of tongues (so invaluable to missionaries, had it been really a capacity of speaking foreign languages) very low among spiritual endowments. "First Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, *after that* miracles, *then* gifts of healing, helps, governments, *diversities of* tongues" (xii. 28). "Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues" (xiv. 5). He further expressly explains this gift to consist in unintelligible utterances, which were useless to, and lost upon, the audience. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God, *for no man understandeth him*" (xiv. 2). (See also ver. 6–9, 16.) Finally, he intimates pretty plainly that the practice of speaking these unknown tongues was becoming vexatious, and bringing discredit on the Church; and he labours hard to discourage it. "I thank my God that I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (xiv. 18, 19). "If the whole Church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in unlearned men or unbelievers, will they not say ye are mad?" (ver. 23). "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. . . . . For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (ver. 27–33). (See also ver. 39, 40.)

It is, we think, almost impossible to read the whole of the three chapters from which the above citations were made,

[1] We are glad to corroborate our opinion by a reference to that of Neander, who, in his "History of the Planting of the Early Church," comes to the same conclusion, chap. i.

without coming to the conclusion that in the early Christian Church there were a number of weak, mobile, imaginative minds, who, over-excited by the sublimity of the new doctrine expounded to them, and by the stirring eloquence of its preachers, passed the faint and undefinable line which separates enthusiasm from delirium, and gave vent to their exaltation in incoherent or inarticulate utterances, which the compassionate sympathy, or the consanguineous fancies, of those around them, dignified with the description of speaking, or prophesying, in an unknown tongue. No one familiar with physiology, or medical or religious history[1], can be

[1] Somewhat similar phenomena have manifested themselves on several occasions in the course of the last eight hundred years, and even in our own day, when religious excitement has proved too strong for weak minds or sensitive frames to bear without giving way. We find them recorded in the case of the ecstatics of Cevennes, who underwent severe persecution in France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and among the *convulsionnaires* of St. Medard near the close of last century. Both these cases are examined in considerable detail in a very curious and valuable work by Bertrand, a French physician, "Sur les Varietés de l'Extase" (pp. 323, 359.) But our own country has presented us within a few years with a reproduction of precisely the same results arising from similar causes. There is extant a very remarkable and painfully-interesting pamphlet by a Mr. Baxter, who was at one time a shining light in Mr. Irving's congregation, and a great "speaker with tongues," in which he gives a detailed account of all the accompanying phenomena. It was written after he had recovered; though he never relinquished his belief in the supernatural nature of these utterances, but finally concluded them to be from Satan, on the ground of some of the speakers uttering what he thought false doctrine. The description he gives of his own state and that of others during the visitations indicate in a manner that no physiologist can mistake, a condition of cerebral excitement verging on hysteria and madness, and by no means uncommon. Sometimes, when praying, his shrieks were so loud that he was compelled to "thrust his handkerchief into his mouth that he might not alarm the house." Others fell down "convulsed and foaming like demoniacs." "My whole body was violently agitated; for the space of ten minutes I was paralyzed under a shaking of my limbs, and no expression except a convulsive sigh." His friends "remarked on his excited state of mind." A servant was taken out of his house deranged, and pronounced by the tongues to be possessed by a devil. Another "speaker with tongues" did nothing but mutter inarticulate nonsense with a "most revolting expression of countenance." Mr. Baxter says that the utterances which were urged upon him by "the power," were sometimes intelligible, sometimes not; sometimes French, sometimes Latin, and sometimes in languages which he did not know, but which his wife thought to be Spanish. He says at last, "My persuasion concerning the unknown tongue is that it is *no language whatever*, but a mere collection of words and sentences, often a mere jargon of sounds." One man seldom began to speak without the contagion seizing upon others, so that numbers spoke at once, as in Paul's time. It is clear to any one who reads Mr. Baxter's candid and unpretending narrative, that a skilful physician would at once have terminated the whole delusion by a liberal exhibition of phlebotomy and anodynes.

ignorant how contagious delusions of this nature always prove, and when once these incoherences became the recognized sign of the descent of the Spirit, every one would, of course, be anxious to experience, and to propagate them. We have seen the same thing precisely in our own day among the Irvingites. How is it, then, that the same phenomena of mental weakness and excitement which in the one case aroused only pity and contempt, should in the other be regarded with a mysterious reverence and awe?

The language of Paul in reference to the "unknown tongues" appears to us clearly that of an honest and a puzzled man, whose life in an age of miracles, and whose belief in so many grand religious marvels, has prepared him to have faith in more;—whose religious humility will not allow him to prescribe in what manner the Spirit of God may, or may not, operate:—but at the same time, whose strong good sense makes him feel that these incomprehensible utterances must be useless, and were most probably nonsensical, unworthy, and grotesque. He seems to have been anxious to repress the unknown tongue, yet unwilling harshly to condemn it as a vain delusion.

That there was a vast amount of delusion and unsound enthusiasm in the Christian Church at the time of the Apostles, not only seems certain, but it could not possibly have been otherwise, without such an interference with the ordinary operations of natural causes as would have amounted to an incessant miracle. Wonders, real or supposed, were of daily occurrence. The subjects habitually brought before the contemplation of Believers were of such exciting and sublime magnificence that even the strongest minds cannot too long dwell upon them without some degree of perilous emotion. The recent events which closed the life of the Founder of their Faith, and above all the glorious truth, or the splendid fiction, of his resurrection and ascension, were depicted with all the exaggerating grandeur of oriental imagination. The expectation of an almost immediate end of the world, and the reception into glory and power of the living believer,—the hope which each one entertained, of being "caught up" to meet his Redeemer in the clouds—was of itself sufficient to overthrow all but the coldest tempers; while the constant state of mental tension in which they were kept by the antagonism and persecution of the

world without, could not fail to maintain a degree of exaltatation very unfavourable to sobriety either of thought or feeling. All these influences, too, were brought to bear upon minds the most ignorant and unprepared, upon the poor and the oppressed, upon women and children; and to crown the whole, the most prominent doctrine of their faith was that of the immediate, special, and hourly influence of the Holy Spirit—a doctrine of all others the most liable to utter and gross misconception, and the most apt to lead to perilous mental excitement. Hence they were constantly on the look-out for miracles. Their creed did not supply, and indeed scarcely admitted, any criterion of what was of divine origin —for who could venture to pronounce or define how the Spirit might or should manifest itself?—and thus ignorance and folly too often become the arbiters of wisdom—and the ravings of delirium were listened to as the words of inspiration, and of God. If Jesus could have returned to earth thirty years after his death, and sat in the midst of an assembly of his followers, who were listening in hushed and wondering prostration of mind to a speaker in the "unknown tongue," how would he have wept over the humiliating and disappointing spectacle! how would he have grieved to think that the incoherent jargon of delirium or hysteria should be mistaken for the promptings of his Father's spirit!

We are driven, then, to the painful, but unavoidable, conclusion, that those mysterious and unintelligible utterances which the Apostles and the early Christians generally looked upon as the effects of the Holy Spirit—the manifestation of its presence—the signs of its operation—the especial indication and criterion of its having fallen upon any one—were in fact simply the physiologically natural results of morbid and perilous cerebral exaltation, induced by strong religious excitement acting on uncultivated and susceptible minds;—results which in all ages and nations have followed in similar circumstances and from similar stimuli;—and that these "signs," to which Peter appealed, and to which the other brethren succumbed, as proving that God intended the Gospel to be preached to Gentiles as well as to Jews, showed only that Gentiles were susceptible to the same excitements, and manifested that susceptibility in the same manner, as the Jews.

Shortly after the question as to the admission of the

Gentiles into the Christian Church had been decided in the singular and inconclusive manner above related, a second subject of dispute arose among the brethren—a corollary almost of the first—the nature of which strongly confirms some of the views we have just put forth. The dispute was this:—whether it was necessary for those Gentiles who had been baptized and admitted into the Christian Community, to observe the ritual portion of the Jewish law?—whether, in fact, by becoming Christians, they had, *ipso facto*, become Jews, and liable to Judaic observances? The mere broaching of such a question, and the serious schism it threatened in the infant sect, show how little the idea had yet taken root among the disciples, of *the distinctness of the essence*, the superiority of the spirit, the newness of the dispensation, taught by Jesus, and how commonly Christianity was regarded as simply a purification and renewal of Judaism.

It appears from the 15th chapter of the Acts, that when Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch, teaching and baptizing the Gentiles, certain Jewish Christians (Pharisees we are told in verse 5) caused considerable trouble and dissension by asserting that it was necessary for the new converts "to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses"—a doctrine which Paul and Barnabas vehemently opposed. The question was so important, and the dissension became so serious, that a council of the Apostles and Elders was summoned at Jerusalem to discuss and decide the matter. From the brief account given by Luke of the proceedings of this conclave it does not appear that there was any material difference among those assembled—the *speakers* among them, at least Peter, Paul, and James, all arguing on the same side; but from the account of the same[1] transaction, given by Paul in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, it is clear that Peter (covertly or subsequently) took the Jewish side of the discussion, "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

[1] The same, or a similar one.

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" This speech, directed *against* Peter, is so like that which Luke (Acts xv. 10, 11) puts into the mouth of Peter, that we cannot but suppose some mistake on the historian's part.[1] It is certain, however, both from the narrative in the Acts and from the whole tenour of the Pauline Epistles, that the case was argued without any reference to the intentions of Christ, or to instructions left by him—but, instead, by inconclusive quotations from prophecy, and by considerations of practical good sense. The decision at which they arrived, on the suggestion of James, seems on the whole to have been both wise and sound; viz. that the Gentile converts should not be burdened with the observances of the ritual law, but should abstain from everything which could be considered as countenancing or tolerating idolatry, from fornication, and from food which, probably from its unwholesomeness, was considered unlawful in most oriental countries.

The discussion and decision of this Council on a question of such vital import, both to the success and to the character of Christianity—a question involving its spiritual nature and essence—show strongly and clearly the two points essential to our present argument: *first*, that difference of opinion on matters of vital significance existed among the Apostles; and, *secondly*, that these matters were discussed in their Councils on argumentative grounds, without the least pretension on the part of any of them to infallibility, supernatural wisdom, or exclusive or peculiar knowledge of the mind of Christ.

That very different views as to the essentials and most important elements of Christianity were taken by the several Apostles, or rather, perhaps, that the same elements underwent very material modifications in passing through such different minds—that to some its essence seemed to consist in the ethical and spiritual, and to others in the speculative and scholastic, ideas which it contained or suggested—can

[1] Unless, as has been suggested, Peter afterwards, overpowered by the unanimity of the Judaizers, flinched from his principles, and so incurred Paul's indignation.

and probable explanation. The death and resurrection of Christ must have worked, and evidently did work, a very great modification in many of the notions of the twelve Apostles, and materially changed their point of view of their Lord's mission. But there are many indications that this change was not a radical one; it affected rather the *accessories* than the *essence* of their Messianic notions; for, though they relinquished their expectation of an *immediate* restoration of the kingdom, they still, as we have seen, retained the conviction that that restoration would take place, in their own day, in a far more signal and glorious manner. Their views were spiritualized up to a certain point, *but no further*, even as to this great subject; and on other points the change seems to have been even less complete. The Epistle of James, indeed, is a worthy relic of one who had drunk in the spirit, and appreciated the lessons, of the meek, practical, and spiritual Jesus. But in the case of the other two Apostles, Peter is Peter still, and John is the John of the Gospel. Peter is the same fine, simple, affectionate, impetuous, daring, energetic, *impulsive* character, who asked to walk on the water, and was over-confident in his attachment to his Master, but who has now derived new strength and dignity from his new position, and, from the sad experience of the past, has learned to look with a steady eye on suffering and death. And John, in the Epistles, is precisely the same mixture of warm affectionateness to his friends, and uncharitableness to his enemies, which the few glimpses we have of him in the Gospels would lead us to specify as his characteristics. We meet with several passages in his writings which indicate that the gentle, forbearing, and forgiving spirit of the Master had not yet thoroughly penetrated and chastened the mind of the disciple—several passages which Jesus, had he read them, would have rebuked as before, by reminding his zealous follower that he knew not what manner of spirit he was of.[1]

[1] "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son."—(1 Ep. ii. 22.) "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us."—(iv. 6.) "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."—(v. 16.) "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."—(v. 19.) "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house; neither bid him God speed."—

The case of Paul is peculiar, and must be considered by itself. His writings are more voluminous than those of the other Apostles, in a tenfold proportion, and have a distinctive character of their own; yet he never saw Christ in the flesh, and was a bitter persecutor of his followers till suddenly converted by a vision. What, then, were his means of becoming acquainted with the spirit and doctrines of his Lord?

And, first, as to the vision which converted him. We have *four* narratives of this remarkable occurrence—one given by Luke, as an historian, in the 9th chapter of the Acts; a second, *reported* by Luke (c. xxii.), as having been given by Paul himself in his speech to the people at Jerusalem; a third, reported also by Luke (c. xxvi.), as having been given by Paul to King Agrippa; and a fourth, more cursory, from Paul himself, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, which omits entirely the external and marvellous part of the conversion, and speaks only of an internal[1] revelation.

Now there are certain discrepancies in these accounts, which, while they seem to show that the occurrence—either from carelessness, confusion, or defect of memory—has not been related with perfect accuracy, leave us also in doubt as to the precise nature of this vision;—as to whether, in fact, it was mental or external. Luke, in his narrative, omits to state whether the supernatural light was visible to the companions of Paul as well as to himself. Paul, in his speech to the Jews, declares that it was. Paul is said to have heard a voice speaking to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Luke affirms that Paul's companions heard this voice as well as himself; but this assertion Paul afterwards, in his speech at Jerusalem (Acts xxii. 9), expressly contradicts; and we are, therefore, left with the impression that the supernatural voice fell rather upon Paul's mental, than on his outward ear—was, in fact, a spiritual suggestion, not an objective fact. Again, in his speech at Jerusalem, Paul represents the heavenly voice as referring him to future conferences, at Damascus (xxii. 10), for particulars of his

(2 Ep. ver. 10.) "I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words."—(3 Ep. ver. 9, 10.)

[1] "But when it pleased God . . . . to *reveal his Son in me*, that I might preach him among the Heathen," &c.—Gal. i. 16.

commission; in his address to Agrippa (xxvi. 16–18), he represents the same voice as giving him his commission on the spot.

Thus, in the three versions of the story which come, entirely or proximately, from the pen of Luke, we have positive and not reconcilable contradictions; while in that reference to it, which alone we are *certain* proceeded from Paul, the supernatural and external is wholly ignored.

But the important practical question for our consideration is this:—In what manner, and from what source, did Paul receive instruction in the doctrines of Christianity? Was it from the other Apostles, like an ordinary convert? or by special and private revelation from heaven?--Here, again, we find a discrepancy between the statements of Luke and Paul. In Acts ix. 19, 20; xxii. 10; and xxvi. 20, it is expressly stated, that immediately after his conversion, and during his abode with the disciples at Damascus, he was instructed in the peculiar doctrines of his new faith, and commenced his missionary career accordingly, *there and then*. If this statement be correct, his teaching will have the authority due to that of an intelligent and able man, *well instructed at second hand*, but no more. Paul, however, entirely contradicts this supposition, and on several occasions distinctly and emphatically declares that he did not receive his religious teaching from any of the disciples or apostles (whom he rather avoided than otherwise), but by direct supernatural communications from the Lord Jesus Christ[1].

[1] For example:—"Paul, an apostle, *not of man, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ.*" "But I certify unto you brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I *neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" But when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:* neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But *other of the apostles saw I none*, save James the Lord's brother."—(Galatians i. 1, 11, 15–19. "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery, . . . whereby ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."—(Eph. iii. 3.) "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. . . . . And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations," &c.—(2 Cor. xii. 2, 4, 7.)

Of course Paul's own account of the mode in which he received his knowledge of Christianity must be taken, in preference to that of a narrator like Luke, whose information could only have been second-hand. Paul intimates, as we have seen, that he rather slighted and avoided all ordinary channels of instruction, and prides himself on the originality, exclusiveness, and directness, of the sources of his knowledge. The decision, therefore, of his fidelity and competence as a representative and teacher of the doctrines of Christ, depends entirely on the conclusion we may form as to the genuineness and *reality* of the visions and revelations with which he claims to have been favoured. If these were actual and positive communications from his risen and glorified Master, the question admits of no further discussion; Paul was the greatest of the Apostles, and his writings of paramount authority to any other. If, on the other hand, these visions were merely the workings of a powerful and fiery mind in the solitude and seclusion of an Arabian hermitage, such as an ardent and excited temperament, like that of Paul, might easily come to regard as the suggestions of the Divine Spirit, and, perhaps, even could with difficulty distinguish from them; then all his numerous epistles are the teachings, not of Jesus, but of Paul.

Now, not only have we no evidence—(perhaps we *could* have none)—beyond the bare assertion of Paul himself, that these alleged communications had any other than a subjective existence—were in fact anything beyond a mere mental process;—but among all the passages which refer to this subject, there are none which do not more readily bear this interpretation than any other—with one exception[1]. That exception is the statement of Luke, that the heavenly voice at mid-day was heard by Paul's companions as well as by himself—a statement, which being afterwards contradicted by Paul (or by Luke for him), may at once be put aside as incorrect. Paul "immediately," as he says, upon his miraculous conversion, went into seclusion to meditate and commune with his own heart upon the marvellous change which had taken place in all his feelings;—and the state

[1] Perhaps the assertion of Paul that he had seen Jesus, "and last of all he was seen by me also"—1 Cor. xv. 8—may be considered as another exception. This sight of Jesus, however, probably refers to the vision at the moment of his conversion.

into which he more than once describes himself as having fallen, is that of trance, a condition of the cerebral system—assuredly not a sound one—which solitude, fasting, and religious excitement combined, produce in all ages and countries, and nowhere so readily as in the East. (Acts, xxii. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 24.) We cannot of course, and do not wish, to take upon us to affirm that, while in this state, Paul was *not* favoured with divine communications; we merely wish to make it clear that we have no reason to believe that he was so favoured, beyond his own assertion—an assertion which has been made with equal sincerity and conviction by hundreds of extatics whom similar causes have brought into a similar physiological condition.

There is much in the tone of the doctrinal writings of Paul which we believe and feel to be at variance, or at least little in harmony, with the views and spirit of Jesus, but nothing perhaps which we can *prove* to be so. We must therefore conclude with the ungracious task of pointing out a few passages of which the moral tone shows that the writer was not adequately imbued with the temper of Him who said, "Do good to those that hate you: Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (2 Thess. i. 6-8; ii. 11, 12; 1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 14; Gal. i. 8, 9.)

CHAPTER XIII.

MIRACLES.

THE position which the miracles of the New Testament are made to hold in the Christian economy is of the first importance. In the popular theory they lie at the very foundation of the system. The current and, till recently, scarcely questioned opinion of Protestant Christendom respecting them was this:—"The miracles which Jesus wrought constitute the proof of his divine commission, and the guarantee for the truth of the doctrines which he preached. His declarations and his precepts are to be received with unquestioning submission and belief, *because* he wrought miracles in proof of his authority to teach and to command."[1]—According to this (the prevalent) view, the truth of Christ's doctrines is made to rest upon the reality of his miracles;—we should not know the doctrines to be divine, had it not been for the attesting wonders wrought by the Teacher; and whatever doctrines are preached by a worker of miracles, are, *ipso facto*, proved to be of divine authority, and must therefore be received without question.

Now this popular notion appears to us to contain much confusion, and at least two fatal fallacies; for the more clear disentanglement and exposure of which we shall proceed to show,

I. That miracles wrought by any individual are not, nor can be, a proof of the truth of the doctrines which he preaches;—and,

II. That miracles are not the real basis of Christianity, and cannot be a safe foundation on which to rest its claims,

[1] See Paley, Evid.

inasmuch as miracles can never be proved by *documentary* evidence—least of all, by such documentary evidence as we possess.

Before proceeding further, we will define the precise theological meaning affixed to the word miracle in the popular mind (as far as the popular mind can be said to attach a precise meaning to any word). This is the more necessary, as a writer of great eminence and ability, in his attempt to show that miracles may be not a violation, but a fulfilment, of the order of nature, appears to us to have confounded a *miracle* with a *prodigy*.

In common parlance—which alone we profess to use—a miracle is a suspension or violation of the ordinary course of nature, *at the will of an individual*—indicating, therefore, the possession by that individual of superhuman power. A similar suspension or violation, *unconnected with the command or prediction of any individual*, is simply a *prodigy*, not a *miracle*. A prodigy is merely a marvellous and abnormal occurrence, of the cause and meaning of which we are wholly ignorant; a miracle is a marvellous and supernatural occurrence, the cause of which lies open to us in the expressed volition of an agent. Lazarus rising out of a four days' grave, without any discoverable cause or antecedent, would merely present to us a prodigy;—Lazarus coming forth at the command of Christ was a manifest miracle.

Mr. Babbage, in that ingenious chapter, in his "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise," wherein he endeavours to show that miracles may be merely natural, b[illegible]ptional occurrences —*the exceptional expressions of* [illegible]*atural law* expressly provided for beforehand—seems to have altogether lost sight of this distinction. We might not have deemed it necessary to controvert this theory, had it not been recently adopted and promulgated in a popular work of fiction ("Alton Locke"), by a clergyman of the Church of England. But when so sanctioned it becomes incumbent upon us to unmask the fallacy. "The object of the present chapter (says Mr. Babbage) is to show that miracles are not deviations from the laws assigned by the Almighty for the government of matter and of mind; but that they are the exact fulfilment of much more extensive laws than those we suppose to exist." His conception is that, in the final arrangement

of all things, the Deity provided for the occurrence of those deviations from the established course of Nature which we call miracles, at certain periods, and under certain circumstances; and he contends that such an arrangement suggests grander views of creative power and foresight than either casual interpositions or a uniform and undisturbed order of proceeding would do. We may concede both points;—we merely contend that such pre-arranged occurrences would not be *miracles* in the ordinary sense of the word, on which ordinary sense all theological arguments are based. If Lazarus rose from the dead in obedience to, and in consequence of, "an exceptional law" impressed upon matter in primeval times, (which is Mr. Babbage's conception of the case, and which *may* be a correct one), then he was not raised from the dead by an action upon the laws of Nature, emanating from the will of Christ;—and all arguments based upon this (the prevalent) view of the event fall to the ground. On Mr. Babbage's supposition, the connection between the command of Christ, "Lazarus, come forth!" and the resurrection of the dead man, was not that of cause and effect, but merely that of coincidence or simultaneity; or, at the utmost, the command was uttered, because Jesus, of his superhuman knowledge, knew that the moment was arrived when one of these "exceptional laws" was about to operate, in fact the *command* was a *prediction*,—a supposition contradicted by the whole language of the narrative, and unavailing for the popular argument; which is, that Christ had the power of countermanding nature—not merely that of foreseeing events hidden from ordinary knowledge.

Mr. Babbage's conception, therefore, though it may make miracles more admissible by scientific minds, does so by depriving them of their theological utility. It makes the fact credible by annulling the argument drawn from it. Or, to speak more correctly, it renders prodigies credible, by *making them cease to be miracles*[1].

I. We now proceed to illustrate the first of our two positions. A miracle, we say, cannot authenticate a doctrine.

[1] If Mr. Babbage means, as an expression at page 97 seems to intimate, that the Creator had provided for these exceptional occurrences taking place *whenever Christ performed a certain operation* which He gave him power to perform, and told him when to perform—then we are at a loss to discover in what way the conception varies from, or is superior to, the vulgar view.

A miracle, if genuine, proves the possession by him who works it, of superhuman power—but it is a strained and illogical inference to assume that it proves anything beyond this. This inference, so long and so universally made—and allowed—arises from a confusion in the popular mind between *power* and *wisdom*—between the divine nature as a whole, and *one* of the divine attributes. It involves the immense and inadmissible assumption that the possession of superhuman power necessarily implies the possession of superhuman knowledge also, and the will truly to impart that knowledge; that the power to heal diseases, or to still the waves, implies and includes a knowledge of the mind of God. The thoughts of ordinary men, undistinguishing and crude, jump rapidly to a conclusion in such matters; and on recognizing (or conceiving that they recognize) supernatural power in any individual, at once and without ratiocination endow him with all other divine attributes, and bow before him in trembling and supine prostration.

Yet at other times, and in most countries, men have, by happy inconsistency, admitted the falseness of this logic. Wherever there is found a belief in one evil angel, or in many (and such is the current nominal belief of Christendom), the distinction between the attributes of Deity is made, and power is divorced from wisdom, truth, and goodness, and in a great degree from knowledge also. If there be such existences as Satan, Arimanes, or inferior agencies of evil—(and who can say that there are not? What orthodox Christian but believes there are?)—then superhuman power exists apart from divine wisdom, and in antagonism to it;—then the power to work miracles involves no knowledge of divine truth, or at least no mission to teach it—nay, may imply the very opposite, and can therefore authenticate no doctrine enunciated by the worker.

The common feeling no doubt is, that as all supernatural power is the special gift of God, He would not have bestowed it upon any but the good, nor for any purpose but that of conferring blessings and spreading truth. But this inference is wholly at variance with the analogies of the divine economy. *All* power is the direct gift of God—the power of intellect, the power of rank, the power of wealth, as well as the power of working physical marvels,—yet are these given to the good alone, or chiefly?—are these bestowed on those who

employ them exclusively, or mainly, in the service of mercy and truth? Would not the reverse of the statement be nearer to the fact?

So strongly has the force of our position been felt by reasoners—so plain does it appear that it is the doctrine which must authenticate the miracle, not the miracle which can authenticate the doctrine,—that few could be found at the present day who would not admit that no miracle worked by a preacher would induce them to receive from him a doctrine manifestly dishonouring to God. Many of our modern divines,—Dr. Arnold, Archdeacon Hare, Mr. Locke, Mr. Trench, and others,—express this feeling in the strongest language. Dr. Arnold says ("Christian Course and Character," notes pp. 462-3):

"Faith, without reason, is not properly faith, but mere power-worship; and power-worship may be devil-worship; for it is reason which entertains the idea of God—an idea essentially made up of truth and goodness, no less than of power. A sign of power, exhibited to the senses, might, through them, dispose the whole man to acknowledge it as divine; yet power in itself is not divine, it may be devilish. . . . . How can we distinguish God's voice from the voice of evil? . . . . . We distinguish it (and can distinguish it no otherwise), by comparing it with that idea of God which reason intuitively enjoys, the gift of reason being God's original revelation of himself to man. Now, if the voice which comes to us from the unseen world agree not with this idea, *we have no choice but to pronounce it not to be God's voice; for no signs of power, in confirmation of it, can alone prove it to be from God.*"

Locke says:—"I do not deny in the least that God can do, or hath done, miracles for the confirmation of truth; I only say that we cannot think He should do them to enforce doctrines or notions of himself, or any worship of Him, not conformable to reason, or that we can receive such as truth *for the miracles' sake;* and even in those books which have the greatest proof of revelation from God, and the attestation of miracles to confirm their being so, the miracles are to be judged by the doctrine, and not the doctrine by the miracles."[1]

[1] See also Lord King's Life of Locke, i. 231 et seq. Trench's Hulsean Lectures for 1845, pp. 8, 9.—"After all is done, men will feel in the deepest

Further. The idea that a miracle can authenticate a doctrine, or is needed to do so, involves an additional fallacy. It implies that our understanding is competent to decide whether *an act* be divine, but not whether *a doctrine* be divine;—that the power displayed in a prodigy may be sufficient to justify us in confidently assuming it to be from God,—but that the beauty, the sublimity, the innate light of a doctrine or a precept cannot be sufficient to warrant us in pronouncing it to be from Him;—that God can impress his stamp unmistakably on his physical, but not on his moral emanations;—that His handwriting is legible on the sea, or the sky, on the flower, or on the insect, but not on the soul and intellect of man. It involves the coarse and monstrous conception that God's presence in His chosen temple can only be made manifest by a noisy appeal to those external senses which perish with the flesh;—that He pervades the earthquake and the whirlwind, but *not* 'the still small voice;'—that, in fine, the eye or the ear is a truer and quicker percipient of Deity than the Spirit which came forth from Him;—*that God is more cognizable by the senses than by the soul,*—by the material philosopher than by the pure-hearted but unlearned worshipper.

The power to work miracles, then, does not, in the eye of reason, imply any other supernatural endowment. Neither does it in the eye of Scripture. We have many indications, in both the Old and the New Testament, that neither miracles, nor the cognate gift of prophecy, were considered to qualify a Teacher, or to authenticate his teaching. The possession of miraculous and prophetic power is distinctly recognized in individuals who not only were not divinely authorized agents or teachers, but were enemies of God and of his people. Passing over the remarkable but inconclusive narratives relative to the Egyptian magicians, and to Balaam,—we find in Deut. xiii. 1-5, an express warning to the chil-

centre of their being, that it is the moral which must prove the historic, *not the historic which can ever prove the moral;* that evidences drawn from without may be accepted as the welcome *buttresses*, but that we can know no other *foundations*, of our Faith, than those which itself supplies. Revelation, like the sun, must be seen by its own light." Hare's Mission of the Comforter, ii. p. 553.—"The notion that miracles have an augmentative and demonstrative efficacy, and that the faith of Christians is to be grounded upon them, belongs to a much later age, and is in fact the theological parallel to the materialist hypothesis, that all our knowledge is derived from the senses."

dren of Israel against being led astray by those who shall employ *real* miraculous or prophetic gifts to entice them away from the worship of Jehovah,—a warning couched in language which distinctly expresses that the miracle must be judged of by the doctrine of the thaumaturgist,—not be considered to authenticate it. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, *and the sign or the wonder come to pass*, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: *and that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death.*"

The same proposition is affirmed with almost equal distinctness in Matth. vii. 22, 23. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Again, Matth. xxiv. 24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and *shall shew great signs and wonders;* insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." In Matth. xii. 27, and Mark ix. 38, Christ clearly admits the power to work miracles in both his enemies and his ignorers.

If anything further were wanted to show the view taken by Jesus of this matter, we should find it in his steady refusal to authenticate his mission by a miracle, when, in strict conformity to Jewish ideas (and to divine prescription, if the Mosaic books may be at all trusted), the rulers of the synagogue, in the plain performance of their official duty, called upon him to work one. (See Matth. xii. 39; xvi. 4, and the parallel passages, as Mark viii. 11.) He reproaches the deputation for their demands—grieves over it, according to Mark,—and says positively, "There shall no sign be given to this generation." In another conversation with the Pharisees, the same idea is still more clearly enunciated. He there (John vi. 30-33) distinctly tells them that though Moses may have been accredited by miracles, *he* will be judged of by his doctrine only. "They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our father s did ea

manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. . . . . I am the bread of life," &c. The low estimation in which miracles were held by the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. xii. 28), clearly shows that he did not regard them as *the* credentials of his mission; and several passages in the Acts seem to intimate that, by the early Christians, the possession of the miraculous or prophetic gift was not considered inconsistent both with false doctrine and enmity to Christ's Church. (Acts viii. 9-11; xiii. 6-10; xvi. 16; 2 Cor. xi. 13.) Finally, we have the conclusive fact that the power to work miracles had been expressly conferred upon all the Apostles, who "forsook Jesus and fled" in his day of trial,—upon Judas, who betrayed him,—upon Peter, who thrice denied him.

It is said, however, by some, that miraculous power is bestowed upon Prophets, as their *credentials;* not as proving their doctrines, but as proving them to be sent from God. But, is it not clear, that these credentials, if they mean anything at all, must mean that men are to listen to the Prophets who present them, as God's mouthpieces? What is the object of proving them to be sent from God, except for the sake of the inference that *therefore* what they teach must be God's truth?

II. Having now proved our first position,—that miracles cannot authenticate either the doctrines or the divine commission of the thaumaturgist—we proceed to the establishment of our second thesis, viz.,—that miracles cannot be the basis of Christianity, or of any historical or transmitted religion.

We fully admit at the outset of our argument that a miracle, as well as any other occurrence, is capable of proof by testimony—provided only the testimony be adequate in kind and in quantity. The testimony must be of the same kind as that on which we should accept any of the more rare and marvellous among natural phenomena, and must be clear, direct, and ample, in proportion to the marvellousness, anomalousness, and rarity of the occurrence. This, it appears to us, is all that philosophy authorizes us to demand for the authentication of the *fact-part* of a miracle.

Miracles, we say, are not, and never can be, a sure foundation for a revealed religion—an historic creed. A true Revelation, addressed to all mankind, and destined for all ages, must be attested by evidence adequate and accessible to all men and to all ages. It must carry with it its own permanent and unfading credentials. Now, miracles are evidence only to those who see them, or can sift the testimony which affirms them. Occurrences so anomalous and rare, which violate the known and regular course of nature, can, at the utmost, only be admitted on the evidence of our own senses, or on the carefully-sifted testimony of eye-witnesses. Therefore, a revelation, whose credentials are miracles, *can be a revelation only to the age in which it appears.* The superhuman powers of its Preacher can authenticate it only to those who witness the exertion of them, and—more faintly and feebly—to those who have received and scrutinized *their* direct testimony:—the superhuman excellence of its doctrines may authenticate it through all time, and must constitute, therefore, its only adequate and abiding proof.

Now, the essence of the whole question lies in this:—that *we have not the Apostles and Evangelists to cross-examine;* we do not know that they ever were cross-examined; we do not know what was the nature of the evidence or testimony which satisfied their minds; and we have ample indications that they, like most imperfectly-educated men, were satisfied with a nature and amount of proof, which would never satisfy us.

We have stated that we are far from denying the adequacy of positive and direct testimony to prove a miracle, if its amount and quality be suitable. What would be the amount and quality required? It will be allowed on all hands that the testimony of *one* witness, however competent and honest, would not suffice. We must have the *concurring* testimony of *several competent* and *independent* witnesses. Mr. Babbage has made a calculation (which many will think puerile, but which assuredly does not overstate the case), that, to prove some of the chief miracles, such as the raising of the dead, the *concurring* testimony of *six independent, competent, veracious* witnesses will suffice, *but not less.*

Now, let us ask—have we, for any of the gospel miracles, evidence—we do not say as strong as this, but—approaching to it? in the slightest degree similar to it? Have we the

concurring testimony of six independent and competent witnesses? or of five? or of three? or of two? Do we *know* that we have the testimony even of *one* witness? Do we know anything at all about the competency, or the independence of any of the witnesses? Have we any reason to believe that the Evangelists sifted the testimony they received? Have we, in fine, the distinct statement of any one individual, that he saw or wrought such or such a specific miracle? No; but what we have instead is this:—We have four documents, written *we have to guess* when—proceeding from we know not whom—transmitted to us we know not how purely;—three of them evidently compositions from oral testimony or tradition, and clearly *not* from *independent* testimony; and all four, not *concurring*, but often singularly discrepant;—which documents relate that such miracles were wrought by a certain individual in a certain place and time. It is obvious that we have not here even *an approach* to personal testimony [1]. We do not know with the least certainty who any of these four narrators were;—not one of them says, "*I* witnessed this miracle;"—we do not, therefore, know that they were witnesses at all;—and we do know that their testimony was neither *independent* nor *concurring*. At the best, therefore, we have only documents of unknown date and uncertain authorship, stating, with many discrepancies and contradictions, that certain miraculous occurrences were witnessed *by others*, at least thirty years before the record was composed;—evidence which, in an honest court of justice, would not suffice to affect person or property to the slightest possible extent;—evidence, nevertheless, on which we are peremptorily summoned to accept the most astounding dogmas, and to bow to the heaviest yoke.

Since, then, for the miracles recorded in the synoptical gospels, we have not even that degree of evidence which would be required to establish any remarkable or questionable occurrence; and since the only superior authority for those of the fourth Gospel, rests on the supposition of its being the production of the Apostle John,—a supposition doubtful and unproven, to say no more;—we might be dis-

[1] We assume here, *not* that the fourth Gospel was *not* written by the Apostle John, but simply that *we do not know that it was*.

pensed from entering into any more close examination of the narratives themselves—as in a court of justice the jury frequently decide against the plaintiff on his own showing—pronounce that the appellant *has no case,* without requiring to hear the objections of the respondent. But it is important to call attention to a few considerations which should long since have warned divines of the perilous position they had taken up, when they resolved to base Christianity upon the miraculous narratives of the Gospel.

1. The whole tenour of the Old Testament, and many passages in the New, plainly indicate either that the power of working miracles was so common in those days as to argue nothing very remarkable in its possessor; or that a belief in miracles was so general and so easily yielded, as to render the testimony of such facile believers inadequate to prove them. On the first supposition, they will not warrant the inference drawn from them;—on the second, they are themselves questionable.

Now, it is certain that the miracles recorded in the New Testament do not appear to have produced on the beholders, or the hearers, the same effect as they would do at the present day—nor to have been regarded in the same light even by the workers of them. When Jesus is told by his disciples (Mark ix. 38) that they had found some unauthorized person casting out devils in his name, he expresses no amazement—*intimates no doubt as to the genuineness of the miracle*—but rebukes his disciples for interfering with the thaumaturgist, saying, "Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall *do a miracle* in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." The casting out of devils—*i. e.*, the healing of the more furious epileptic and maniacal disorders—was the most frequent, and among the most striking and the oftenest appealed to, of the miracles of Jesus, yet in the conversation already referred to between himself and the Pharisees (Matth. xii. 24-27), he speaks of it as one that was constantly and habitually performed by their own exorcists; and, so far from insinuating any difference between the two cases, *expressly puts them on a level*[1]. Paul, though himself gifted with miraculous power, and claiming (Rom. xv. 19; 2 Cor. xii. 11) to be equally so gifted with

[1] Matth. vii. 22; xxiv. 24; Gal. iii. 5, and many other passages, show how *common* miracles then were, or were esteemed.

any of the other Apostles (2 Cor. xi. 5), yet *places this power very low in the rank of spiritual* endowments (1 Cor. xii. 8, 9, 10, 28 [1])—*distinguishing in both passages miracles or thaumaturgic signs from gifts of healing;* and speaks of them in a somewhat slighting tone, which is wholly irreconcilable with the supposition that the miracles of which he speaks were real and indisputable ones after the modern signification of the word—*i. e.*, unquestionable deviations from the observed order of nature, at the command of man.

2. Though the miracles of Christ are frequently referred to in the Gospels as his credentials, as proofs of his divine mission—yet there are not wanting many significant indications that they were wrought rather as a consequence and reward of belief than as means to produce it. For example, we have the repeated refusal of Jesus to satisfy the Jewish chiefs by a display of his miraculous gifts, though we can perceive nothing unreasonable or unsuitable to pure Judaism in the demand (John vi. 30). We have the remarkable fact that Jesus here not only declines to work a new miracle in attestation of his mission, but does not even refer his questioners to his former miracles. We have the reproach of Jesus to the people of Galilee—"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John iv. 48); clearly intimating that these were not the criterions by which he intended his mission to be judged. On several occasions *before* working a miracle, he ascertains the faith of the applicant, and speaks of the miracle as if it were to be the reward, not the provocative, of their faith. (Matthew ix. 27, 29; ix. 2; viii. 10; ix. 22; xv. 28; Mark i. 40.) And, finally, the Evangelists twice assign the want of faith of the people—the very reason, according to the orthodox view, why miracles *should* be worked before them—as the reason why Jesus *would not* work them. "And he did not many mighty works there *because of their unbelief.*" (Matt. xiii. 58.) "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his

[1] "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge; to another faith; to another the gifts of healing; to another *the working of miracles;* to another prophecy," &c. "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; *after that* miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And *he marvelled because of their unbelief.*" (Mark vi. 5, 6.)

3. Neither *did* his miracles produce general conviction—nor the conclusion which would have followed from conviction—in those who witnessed them, whether friends, enemies, or indifferent spectators. Had they appeared to the witnesses in that age in the same form which they assume in the documents in which they are handed down to us, conviction must have been inevitable. Yet this was far from being the case. We read indeed, frequently that the people "marvelled" and "glorified God"—and that "the fame of his wonderful works went throughout all the land;"—but we also find several passages which point to a very opposite conclusion. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matt. xi. 20, 21.) "But though he had done so many miracles before them (the people), yet they believed not on him." (John xii. 37.) Even his friends and disciples were not always convinced. The miracle of the loaves, even, seems to have produced little effect on their minds, for we are told (as a reason for their surprise at a subsequent marvel), "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their hearts were hardened" (Mark vi. 52), an expression which a comparison with xvi. 14, shows to have signified incredulity. A still more significant statement is found in John vii. 5. "For neither did his brethren believe in him." A reference to John xi. 45, 46, shows that even so signal and unquestionable a miracle as is the raising of Lazarus, *in the form in which it has come down to us*, did not produce universal conviction. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. *But some of them* went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."

It is worthy of especial note, that to the last, in defiance of the numerous, astonishing, and public miracles recorded in the Gospels—of many of which, as the raising of Lazarus, the cure of the blind man (John ix.), the Pharisees and chief men among the Jews are said to have been witnesses—the

incredulity of these Rulers and of the Sanhedrim remained unshaken. It is evident, too, that it was genuine and sincere disbelief—not merely a refusal to accept the inference of the divine mission of Christ, on the ground of his miraculous power, but a disbelief in the miraculous power itself—or at least of its being miraculous in our full modern acceptation of the term; they were *exasperated*, but no way *intimidated*, by the wonders which he wrought before them. Had they really supposed that he could cure the blind, heal the lame, command spirits, still the waves, raise the dead (in a different manner, and with a different degree or kind of power from their own thaumaturgists)—still more, had they seen any one of these awful evidences of supernatural power —then, however hostile selfishness and ambition might have made them to his pretensions, they would have dreaded to provoke his enmity, or to practise against his safety, satisfied, as they must have been, that he could not only foresee and baffle their machinations, but could inflict a fearful retaliation. But we see nothing of all this; we see just the reverse;—they feared, not him, but the people who were friendly to him;—they more than once openly attacked him, and tempted him, even by taunts, to a display of his superhuman gifts;—in a word their whole conduct shows that his miracles, whatever they were, had not gone any way towards producing in *their* minds a conviction (*or even a fear*) of his supernatural power.

4. The minuter objections to the individual miraculous narratives in the Gospel, we need not dwell on. The discrepancies in the accounts were given by more than one Evangelist;—the entirely distinct set of miracles recorded in the fourth, from those in the first three Gospels; the remarkable circumstance that, of the three cases of the dead being restored to life, one is mentioned by John only, one by Luke only, and the third case, mentioned by three of the Evangelists, was no resurrection from the dead at all (for all accounts concur in representing Jesus to have said expressly, "The damsel is *not* dead, but sleepeth;")—all these topics have been dwelt upon in detail by other critics, and need not be considered here.

The conclusion suggested by all these combined considerations seems to be this:—that the miracles spoken of in the New Testament had not the effect of real miracles upon the

bystanders;—that they were probably, either remarkable occurrences elevated into supernatural ones by the general supernaturalistic tendencies of the age, or examples of wonderful healing powers, the original accounts of which have become strangely intermingled and overlaid with fiction in the process of transmission. The Gospels (we must bear constantly in mind) are not contemporaneous annals; they merely narrate the occurrence of certain events, which, *at the time when the tradition was congealed into a record*, had assumed such and such a form and consistency in the public mind. They show us not the facts that occurred in the year A.D. 30, *but the form those facts had assumed in popular belief in the year* A.D. 70.

There is yet another objection to the plan of propounding miracles as the basis for a Revelation, which is all but insuperable. The assertion of a miracle having been performed, is not a *simple* statement; it involves three elements—*a fact and two inferences*. It predicates, *first*, that such an occurrence took place; *second*, that it was brought about by the act and will of the individual to whom it is attributed; *third*, that it implied supernatural power in the agent—*i. e.* that it could not have been produced by mere human means. Now, the fact may have been accurately observed, and yet one or both of the inferences may be unwarranted. Or, either inference may be rendered unsound by the slightest omission or deviation from accuracy in the observation or statement of the fact[1]. Nay, any new discovery in science—any advance in physiological knowledge—may show that the inference, which has always hitherto appeared quite irrefragable, was, in fact, wholly unwarranted and incorrect. In the process of time, and the triumphant career of scientific inquiry, any miracle may be—as so many thousand prodigies have been—reduced to a natural occurrence. No miracle can, therefore, be a safe foundation for so vast and weighty a superstructure as a Revelation. A miracle is an argument in some measure *ab ignorantiâ*—based upon ignorance, and, therefore, defeasible by advancing knowledge. A miraculous revelation—a creed, whose foundation is miracle—must always be at the mercy of Science, and must always dread it.

[1] Bentham observes that the report of a man going up with a balloon would become a miracle, if a spectator told all the rest of the story truly, but omitted to tell of the balloon.

It should, then, be clearly understood that, when we decline to receive a miracle as evidence of a divine commission, we are not refusing simple testimony—*we are demurring to a proposition composed of one observation and two inferences*—a proposition, each of the three constituents of which contains the elements of possible inaccuracy;—we are demurring, in fact, to a process of reasoning, *which assumes as its basis that the limits of human power and knowledge are indisputably known to us*[1].

[1] "The miracle is of a most fluctuating character. The miracle-worker of to-day is a matter-of-fact juggler to-morrow. Science each year adds new wonders to our store. The master of a locomotive steam-engine would have been thought greater than Jupiter Tonans, or the Elohim thirty centuries ago."—Parker, p. 202.

CHAPTER XIV.

RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

We are now arrived at the most vitally important, and the most intensely interesting, portion of the Christian records—the resurrection of Jesus. This is the great fact to which the affections of Christians turn with the most cherished eagerness, the grand foundation on which their hopes depend, on which their faith is fixed. If, in consequence of our inquiries, the ordinary doctrine of Scriptural Inspiration be relinquished, we have reason to rejoice that Religion is relieved from a burden often too great for it to bear. If the complete verbal accuracy of the Gospel narratives is disproved, orthodoxy and not Christianity is a sufferer by the change, since it is only the more minute and embarrassing tenets of our creed that find their foundation swept away. If investigation shows the miracles of the Bible to be untenable, or at least unobligatory upon our belief, theologians are comforted by feeling that they have one weak and vulnerable outpost the less to defend. But if the resurrection of our Lord should prove, on closer scrutiny, to rest on no adequate evidence, and a regard to mental integrity should compel us to expunge it from our creed, the generality of Christians will feel that the whole basis of their faith and hope is gone, and their Christianity will vanish with the foundation on which, perhaps half unconsciously, they rested it. Whether this ought to be so is a point for future consideration. All that we have now to do is to remember that truth must be investigated without any side-glance to the consequences which that investigation may have upon our hopes. Our faith is

sure to fail us in the hour of trial if we have based it on fallacious grounds, and maintained it by wilfully closing our eyes to the flaws in its foundations.

The belief in the resurrection of our Lord, when based upon reflection at all, and not a mere mental habit, will be found to rest on two grounds:—*first*, the direct testimony of the Scripture narratives; and *secondly*, the evidence derivable from the subsequent conduct of the Apostles.

I. The narratives of the resurrection contained in the four Gospels present many remarkable discrepancies. But discrepancies in the accounts of an event given by different narrators, whether themselves witnesses, or merely historians, by no means necessarily impugn the reality of the event narrated, but simply those *accessaries* of the event to which the discrepancies relate. Thus, when one evangelist tells us that the two malefactors, who were crucified along with Jesus, reviled him, and another evangelist relates that only one of them reviled him, and was rebuked by the other for so doing, though the contradiction is direct and positive, no one feels that the least doubt is thereby thrown upon the fact of two malefactors having been crucified with Jesus, nor of some reviling having passed on the occasion. Therefore the variations in the narratives of the resurrection given by the four evangelists do not, of themselves, impugn the fact of the resurrection, nor disqualify the evangelists from being received as witnesses. It is characteristic of the honest testimony of eye-witnesses to be discrepant in collateral minutiæ. But, on a closer examination of these accounts, several peculiarities present themselves for more detailed consideration.

1. We have already seen reason for concluding that, of the four Gospels, three at least were certainly not the production of eye-witnesses, but were compilations from oral or documentary narratives current among the Christian community at the time of their composition, and derived doubtless for the most part from very high authority. With regard to the fourth Gospel the opinions of the best critics are so much divided, that all we can pronounce upon the subject with any certainty is, that if it were the production of the Apostle John, it was written at a time when, either from defect of memory, redundancy of imagination, or

laxity in his notions of an historian's duty, he allowed himself to take strange liberties with fact[1]. All, therefore, that the Gospels now present to us is the narrative of the Resurrection, not as it actually occurred, but in the form it had assumed in the minds of the disciples thirty years or more after the death of Jesus.

Now, the discrepancies which we notice in the various accounts are not greater than might have been expected in historians recording an event, or rather traditions of an event, which occurred from thirty to sixty years before they wrote. These records, therefore, discrepant as they are, are, we think, quite sufficient to prove that *something of the kind* occurred, *i. e.* that some occurrence took place which gave rise to the belief and the traditions;—but no more. The *agreement* of the several accounts show that something of the kind occurred:—their discrepancies show that this occurrence was not exactly such as it is related to have been.

Something of the kind occurred which formed the groundwork for the belief and the narrative. What, then, was this something—this basis—this nucleus of fact? The Gospel of Mark contains this nucleus, and this alone[2]. It contains nothing but what all the other accounts contain, and nothing that is not simple, credible, and natural, but it contains enough to have formed a foundation for the whole subsequent superstructure. Mark informs us that when the women went early to the Sepulchre, they found it open, the body of Jesus gone, and some one in white garments who assured them that he was risen. *This all the four narratives agree in;—and they agree in nothing else.* The disappearance of the body, then, was certain;—the information that Jesus was risen came from the women alone, who believed it because *they were told it*, and who were also the first to affirm that they had seen their Lord. In the excited state of mind in which all the disciples must have been at this time, were not these three unquestioned circumstances—that the body was gone;—that a figure dressed in white told the women that their Lord was risen;

[1] See chap. x.

[2] We must bear in mind that the *genuine* Gospel of Mark ends with the 8th verse of chapter xvi.; and that there is good reason to believe that Mark's Gospel was the original one, or at least the earliest.

—and that the same women saw *some one whom they believed to be him;*—amply sufficient to make a belief in his resurrection spread with the force and rapidity of a contagion?

2. It is clear that to prove such a miracle as the reappearance in life of a man who had been publicly slain, the direct and concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses would be necessary;—that two or more should state that they saw him at such a time and place, and *knew* him;—and that this clear testimony should be recorded and handed down to us in an authentic document. This degree of evidence we *might* have had:—this we have not. We have epistles from Peter, James, John, and Jude—all of whom are said by the evangelists to have seen Jesus after he rose from the dead, in none of which epistles is the fact of the resurrection even stated, much less that Jesus was seen by the writer after his resurrection. This point deserves weighty consideration. We have ample evidence that the belief in Christ's resurrection[1] was very early and very general among the disciples, but we have not the direct testimony of any one of the twelve, nor of any eye-witness at all, that they saw him on earth after his death. Many writers say, "*he was seen;*"—no one says "*I* saw him alive in the flesh."

There are three apparent exceptions to this, which, however, when examined, will prove rather confirmatory of our statement than otherwise. If the last chapter of the fourth Gospel were written by the Apostle John, it would contain the direct testimony of an eye-witness to the appearance of Jesus upon earth after his crucifixion. But its genuineness has long been a matter of question among learned men[2], and few can read it critically and retain the belief that it is a real relic of the beloved Apostle, or even that it originally formed part of the Gospel to which it is appended. In the first place, the closing verse of the preceding chapter unmistakably indicates the termination of a history. Then, the general tone of the twenty-first chapter—its particu-

[1] The belief in a general resurrection was, we know, prevalent among the Jews in general, and the disciples of Christ especially; and it appears from several passages that the opinion was that the resurrection would be immediate upon death (Luke xx. 37; xxiii. 43). In this case the belief that Christ was risen would follow immediately on the knowledge of his death.

[2] See Hug, 484.

larity as to the distance of the bark from shore, and the exact number of fishes taken—the fire ready made when the disciples came to land—the contradiction between the fourth verse and the seventh and twelfth, as to the recognition of Jesus—all partake strongly of the legendary character, as does likewise the conversation between Jesus and Peter. Again, the miraculous draught of fishes which is here placed after the resurrection of Christ, is by Luke related as happening at the very commencement of his ministry. And finally, the last two verses, it is clear, cannot be from the pen of John, and we have no grounds for supposing them to be less genuine than the rest of the chapter. On a review of the whole question we entertain no doubt that the whole chapter was an addition of later date, perhaps by some elder of the Ephesian Church.

In the first Epistle of Peter (iii. 18-21), the resurrection and existence in heaven of Jesus are distinctly affirmed; but when we remember that the Jews at that time believed in a future life, and apparently in an immediate transference of the spirit from this world to the next, and that this belief had been especially enforced on the disciples of Jesus (Matt. xvii. 1-4; xxii. 32. Luke xvi. 23-31; xxiii. 43), this will appear very different from an assertion that Jesus had actually risen to an earthly life, and that Peter had seen him. Indeed the peculiar expression that is made use of at ver. 18, in affirming the doctrine ("being slain in flesh, but made alive again in spirit,"[1]) indicates, in the true meaning of the original, not a fleshly, but a spiritual revification.

There remains the statement of Paul (1 Cor. xv. 8), "And last of all, he was seen of me also." This assertion, taken with the context, negatives rather than affirms the reappearance of Christ upon the earth to the bodily eye of his disciples. The whole statement is a loose and rambling one, and inconsistent with the Gospel narratives; but the chief point to be attended to here is that Paul places the appearance of Jesus to the other disciples on the same footing as his appearance to himself. Now, we know that his

[1] Θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι. (Griesbach.) Our common translation alters the preposition, gratuitously and without warrant, and thus entirely loses the writer's antithesis.

appearance to Paul was *in a vision*—a vision visible to Paul alone of all the bystanders, and, therefore, *subjective* or mental merely. The conclusion to be drawn from the language of Paul would, therefore, be that the appearance of Jesus to the other disciples was visionary likewise[1]. Our original statement, therefore, remains unqualified:—we might have had, and should have expected to have, the direct assertion of *four* Apostles, that they had seen Jesus on earth and in the flesh after his death:—we have not this assertion from any one of them.

3. The statements which have come down to us as to when, where, by whom, and how often, Jesus was seen after his death, present such serious and irreconcilable variations as to prove beyond question that they are not the original statements of eye-witnesses, but merely the form which the original statements had assumed, after much transmission, thirty or forty years after the event to which they relate. Let us examine them more particularly. *It will be seen that they agree in everything that is natural and probable, and disagree in everything that is supernatural and difficult of credence.* All the accounts agree that the women, on their matutinal visit to the Sepulchre, found the body gone, and saw some one in white raiment who spoke to them. *They agree in nothing else.*

(1.) They differ as to the number of the women. John mentions only *one*, Mary Magdalene;—Matthew *two*, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary;—Mark *three*, the two Marys and Salome;—Luke *several*, the two Marys, Joanna, and "certain others with them."

(2.) They differ as to the number of persons in white raiment who appeared to the women. Mark speaks of one "young man;"—Matthew of one "angel;"—Luke of two "men;"—John of two "angels."—According to John, also, the appearance of the two angels was not till Mary's second visit to the tomb, after Peter and John had been there.

(3.) They differ as to the words spoken by the apparitions. According to Matthew and Mark they asserted the resurrection of Jesus, and his departure into Galilee,

[1] Bush's Anastasis, p. 164.

and sent a message to his disciples enjoining them to follow him thither. According to Luke they simply stated that he was risen, and referred to a former prediction of his to this effect[1]. According to John they only asked Mary, "Woman! why weepest thou?"

(4.) They differ in another point. According to Matthew, Luke, and John, the women carried the information as to what they had seen at once to the disciples. According to Mark "they said nothing to any man."

(5.) They differ as to the parties to whom Jesus appeared. —According to Mark it was to no one. According to Matthew it was first to the two women, then to the eleven. According to John it was first to one woman, then twice to the assembled Apostles[2]. According to Luke it was first to no woman, but to Cleopas and his companion, then to Peter[3], and then to the assembled eleven.

(6.) They differ as to the locality. According to Mark it was nowhere. According to Matthew it was first at Jerusalem, and then in Galilee, whither the disciples went in obedience to the angelic command. According to Luke it was in Jerusalem and its vicinity, and *there alone*, where the disciples remained in obedience to the reiterated[4] command of Jesus himself. According to the genuine part of John, also, the appearances were confined to Jerusalem.

The account of Paul is of little weight. It differs from all the others; it must have been second-hand; and is valuable only as showing the accounts which were current in the

[1] If, as we have seen reason to believe (chap. viii.), no such prediction was ever uttered, it follows that this reference to it must be purely fictitious.

[2] The text says simply "the disciples," but as they met in a room and with closed doors, and the absence of one of the Apostles on the first occasion mentioned, it evidently means "the eleven."

[3] This appearance to Peter is also mentioned by Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7), from whom probably Luke received it. We have nowhere else any trace of it.

[4] Luke xxiv. 49, 53; Acts i. 4. Luke and Matthew thus contradict each other past all possibility of reconciliation. Matthew tells us that Jesus commanded them to go into Galilee, and that they went thither;—Luke tells us that he positively commanded them "not to depart from Jerusalem," and that they remained there (xxiv. 53). But Luke contradicts himself quite as flatly on another point. In the Gospels he represents the ascension as taking place on the evening of the third day after the crucifixion: such is the clear meaning of the text (as may be seen from verses 21, 33, 36, 50), in spite of all the efforts of ingenuity to pervert it—in the Gospels he places the ascension forty days after the resurrection, and says that Jesus was seen by his disciples during the whole interval.

Christian Church at the time at which he wrote, and how much these varied from the evangelic documents, which were in fact, a selection out of these current accounts. The epistle of Paul, was written, probably, about the year A.D. 59; the first three Gospels between the years A.D. 60 and 70. The appearance to James, which Paul mentions, was taken from the Gospel to the Hebrews, now lost[1].

Now, we put it to any candid man whether the discrepancies in these accounts are not of a nature, and to an extent entirely to disqualify them from being received as evidence of anything, except the currency and credit of such stories among Christians thirty years after the death of Christ?

4. A marked and most significant peculiarity in these accounts, which has not received the attention it deserves, is, that scarcely any of those who are said to have seen Jesus after his resurrection *recognized* him, though long and intimately acquainted with his person. According to Matthew (xxviii. 17), when Jesus appeared to the eleven in Galilee by his own appointment, some, even of them, "doubted;" which could not have been the case had his identity been clearly recognizable. According to Luke, the two disciples, with whom he held a long conversation, and who passed many hours in his company, did not recognize him. "Their eyes were holden, that they should not know him."[2] And even after the disciples had been informed, both of this reappearance and of that to Peter (xxiv. 34–37), yet when Jesus appeared to them, they were affrighted, and supposed that they saw a spirit. According to John, even Mary Magdalene, after Jesus had spoken to her, and she had turned to look at him, still did not recognize him, but supposed him to be the gardener[3]. In the spurious part of

[1] The passage, however, is preserved by Jerome. (See Hennell, p. 227.)

[2] Here another interesting point comes in for consideration. The conversation between Jesus and his two companions turned upon the Messianic prophecies, which the disciples held to have been disappointed by the death of Jesus but which Jesus assured them related to and were fulfilled in him. Now, if the conclusion at which we arrived in a previous chapter (iv.) be correct, viz., that the Old Testament prophecies contain no real reference to a suffering Messiah, or to Jesus at all, it follows, that at least half the story of Cleopas must be fabulous, unless, indeed, we adopt the supposition that Jesus held the same erroneous views respecting these prophecies as his disciples.

[3] Furness ("On the Four Gospels") dwells much on the fact that it was "dark" when Mary visited the Sepulchre (John xx. 1), and that this was

John (xxi. 4–6) the same want of recognition is observable. In the spurious part of Mark we see traces of a belief that Jesus assumed various forms after his resurrection, to account, doubtless, for the non-recognition of some and the disbelief of others (xvi. 11, 12, 13): "After that he appeared *in another form* unto two of them." Now, if it really were Jesus who appeared to these various parties, would this want of recognition have been possible? If it were Jesus, he was so changed that his most intimate friends did not know him. How then can *we* know that it was himself?

We will not attempt to construct, as several have endeavoured to do, out of these conflicting traditions, a narrative of the real original occurrence which gave rise to them, and of the process by which they attained the form and consistency at which they have arrived in the evangelical documents. Three different suppositions may be adopted, each of which has found favour in the eyes of some writers. We may either imagine that Jesus was not really and entirely dead when taken down from the cross, a supposition which Paulus and others show to be far from destitute of probability[1]: or we may imagine that the apparition of Jesus to his disciples belongs to that class of appearances of departed spirits for which so much staggering and bewildering evidence is on record[2]:—or lastly, we may believe that the minds of the disciples, excited by the disappearance of the body, and the announcement by the women of his resurrection, mistook some passing individual for their crucified Lord, and that from such an origin multiplied rumours of his re-appearance arose and spread. We do not, ourselves, definitively adopt any of these hypotheses:—we wish simply to call attention to the circumstance that we have no clear, consistent, credible account of the resurrection;—that the only elements of the narrative which are retained and remain uniform in all

the reason why she did not recognize Jesus. But in the first place, it was not so dark but that she could see that the Sepulchre was open and the body gone. In the second place, her sight of Jesus was on the occasion of her *second* visit to the Sepulchre, and the "darkness" of early dawn was during her *first* visit, and in the interval she had gone to the city to find Peter and John and had returned, by which time it must have been broad day. In the third place, Mark tells us that the visit of Mary was at *sunrise*—ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου—the sun being risen.

[1] Strauss, iii. 288.

[2] See Bush's Anastasis, 156.

its forms,—viz., the disappearance of the body, and the appearance of some one in white at the tomb,—are simple and probable, and in no way necessitate, or clearly point to, the surmise of a bodily resurrection at all. Christ *may* have risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples:—*but it is certain that if he did, the Gospels do not contain a correct account of such resurrection and re-appearance.*

II. The conduct of the Apostles subsequent to the death of Jesus;—the marked change in their character from timidity to boldness, and in their feelings from deep depression and dismay to satisfaction and triumph,—as depicted in the Acts, affords far stronger evidence in favour of the *bodily* resurrection of their Lord, than any of the narratives which have recorded the event. It seems to us certain that the Apostles *believed* in the resurrection of Jesus; nothing short of such a belief could have sustained them through what they had to endure, or given them enthusiasm for what they had to do:—the question, therefore, which remains for our decision is, whether the Apostles could have believed it, had it not been fact,—whether their reception of the doctrine of a general resurrection immediately upon death, coupled with the disappearance of the body of Jesus from the sepulchre in which he had been laid, and the report of the women regarding the statement of the angelic vision, be sufficient to account for so vivid and actuating a faith, without the supposition of his actual appearance to themselves; whether the Apostles, excited by the report that he was risen, could have believed that they had seen him if they had not really done so. This question will be differently answered by different minds; nor do we know that any arguments will weigh more on either side than the simple statement of the problem to be resolved[1]. Certainly, the bold faith of the Apostles, if sufficient, is the *only* sufficient evidence for the occurrence:—the narrative testimony would be inadequate to prove a far more credible event. All we

[1] It is certain that we, in these days, could not believe in the resurrection of an individual to an earthly life unless we had ascertained his death, and ourselves seen him afterwards alive. But we cannot justly apply this reasoning to the early followers of Christ; they were not men of critical, inquiring, or doubting minds, nor accustomed to sift or scrutinize testimony, but on the contrary inured to marvels, and trained to regard the supernatural as almost an ordinary part of the natural, given moreover to see visions, and unhesitatingly to accept them as divine communications.

can say is this:—that a belief in the resurrection and bodily re-appearance of Jesus early prevailed and rapidly obtained currency in the Christian community;—that the Apostles shared the belief in the resurrection, and did not discourage that in the bodily re-appearance;—that, however, none of them (unless the fourth Gospel was written by John) has left us his own testimony to having himself seen Jesus alive after his death;—and that some of the disciples doubted, and others long after disbelieved, the fact[1].

In order to mitigate our pain at finding that the fact of Christ's resurrection has been handed down to us on such inadequate testimony as to render it at best a doubtful inference, it is desirable to inquire whether, in reality, it has the doctrinal value which it has been the habit of theologians to attribute to it. We have been accustomed to regard it not only as the chief and crowning proof of the divinity of our Saviour's mission, but as the type, earnest, and assurance of our own translation to a life beyond the grave. It is very questionable, however, whether either of these views is fully justified by reason.

There can be no doubt that the fact of an individual having been miraculously restored to life, is a signal proof of divine interposition in his behalf. Such restoration may be viewed in three lights:—either as a reward for a life of extraordinary virtue;—or as an intimation that his mission upon earth had been prematurely cut short, and that his reanimation was necessary for its fulfilment;—or as an announcement to the world that he was in a peculiar manner the object of divine regard and the subject of divine influence. The first point of view is evidently irrational, and the offspring of unregenerate and uncultivated thought. It is prompted either by the inconsiderate instincts of the natural man, or by disbelief in a future life. It implies either that there is no future world, or that this world is preferable to it;—since no man, believing in another and a better state of existence,

[1] See 1 Cor. xv. 12. The whole argument of Paul respecting the resurrection is remarkable—it is simply this, there must be a resurrection from the dead because Christ "*is preached*" to have risen; and that if there were no resurrection, then Christ could not be risen. It would seem as if he considered the truth of the resurrection of Christ to depend upon the correctness of the doctrine of the general resurrection (verse 13).

would regard it as an appropriate reward for distinguished excellence to be *reduced* to *this*. The second point of view is, if possible, still more unreasonable, since it assumes that God had permitted such an interference with, and defeat of his plans, that he was obliged to interpose for their renewal. The third aspect in which such a fact is to be regarded alone remains, and is in effect the one in which it is commonly viewed throughout Christendom, viz., as a public announcement from the Most High, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." But this point of view is attended with many difficulties.

In the first place, if the Gospel narratives are to be taken as our standing-ground (and they are as valid for the one case as for the other), the restoration of the dead to life did not necessarily imply any such peculiar favour, or contain any such high announcement. The evangelists record *three* instances of such miraculous resuscitation, in none of which have we any reason for believing the subject of the miracle to be peculiarly an object of divine love or approbation,—in all of which the miracle was simply one of mercy to mourning friends. The resuscitated parties were all obscure individuals, and only one of them appears to have been a follower of Christ. *Secondly*, this point of view was not the one taken by the Apostles. To them the value of Christ's resurrection consisted in its enabling them still to retain, or rather to resume, that belief in the Messiahship of Jesus which his death had shaken[1]. If restored to life, he might yet be, and probably was, that Great Deliverer whom, as Jews, they watched, and waited, and prayed for; if he were dead, then that cherished notion was struck dead with him. Now, if we are right in the conclusion at which we arrived in an earlier chapter[2], viz., that Jesus had nothing in common with that liberating and triumphant conqueror predicted by the Jewish prophets and expected by the Jewish nation; it follows that the especial effect which the resurrection of Christ produced upon the minds of his disciples, was *to confirm them in an error*. This, to them, was its dogmatic value,—the ground on which they hailed the announcement and cherished the belief. *Thirdly*, it will admit of question

[1] This is especially manifest from the conversation on the journey to Emmaus.

[2] See chap. iv.

whether, in the eye of pure reason, the resurrection of Christ, considered as an attestation to the celestial origin of his religion, be not superfluous—whether it be not human weakness, rather than human reason, which needs external miracle as sanction and buttress of a system which may well rely upon its own innate strength,—whether the internal does not surpass and supersede the external testimony to its character,—whether the divine truths which Christ taught should not be to us the all-sufficient attestation of his divine mission. We have seen in the preceding chapter that miraculous power in any individual is no guarantee for the correctness of his teaching. We have seen that if the doctrines which Jesus taught approve themselves to the enlightened understanding and the uncorrupted heart, they are equally binding on our allegiance whether he wrought miracles in the course of his career or not. And if the truth that God is a loving Father, and the precept "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," derive no corroboration from the resurrection of Lazarus or the Youth of Nain, neither can they from that of Christ himself. Doubtless we should sit with more prostrate submission and a deeper reverence at the feet of a teacher who came to us from the grave, but it is probably only the infirmity of our faith and reason which would cause us to do so[1]. Rationally considered, Christ's resurrection cannot prove doctrines true that would else be false, nor certain that would else be doubtful. Therefore, considered as a reward, it is contradictory and absurd; considered as the renewal of an interrupted mission, it involves an unworthy and monstrous conception of God's providence; considered as an attestation to the Messiahship of Jesus, it is an attestation to an error;—considered as a sanction and corroboration of his doctrines, it is, or ought to be, superfluous.

Is the other view which we have been accustomed to take of Christ's resurrection, viz., as the type, pledge, and foretelling of our own,—more consonant to sound reason? We believe the reverse will prove nearer to the truth. That it was regarded in this view by the Apostles, is here no argument for us. For they looked for the coming of their Lord,

[1] Jesus seems to intimate as much when he says, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

and the end of the world, if not in their own lifetime, at least in that of the existing generation,—when they who were alive would be caught up into the clouds, and those who were dead would *come forth out of their graves*, and join together the glorious company of the redeemed. They looked for a *bodily* resurrection for themselves—which on their supposition of the date would be possible,—a resurrection, therefore, of which that of Jesus *was* a prototype—a pattern—a cognate occurrence. But in *our* position the case is not only altered, but reversed. Christ's resurrection was a reanimation of the body which he wore in life; it could, therefore, be an earnest of the resurrection of those only whose bodies still remained to be reanimated: it was an exceptional case; it refers not to us; it conveys no hope to us;—*we are not of those whose resurrection it could typify or assure;* for our bodies, like those of the countless generations who have lived and passed away since Christ trod our earth, will have crumbled into dust, and passed into other combinations, and become in turn the bodies of myriads of other animated beings, before the great expected day of the resurrection of the just. To us a bodily resurrection is impossible. If, therefore, Christ's resurrection were *spiritual*—independent of his buried body—it might be a type and foreshadowing of our own;—if, on the other hand, as the evangelists relate, it was corporeal—if his body left the grave undecayed, and appeared on earth, and ascended into glory,—then its value as a pledge belonged to the men of that age alone,—we have neither part nor lot in its signification;—it is rather an extinguisher than a confirmation of our hopes.

It will be seen that we make no scruple in negativing a doctrine held *verbally* by the Church, viz., "the resurrection of the body;" since, whatever was intended by the authors of this phrase[1]—the meaning of which is by no means clear to us, and was probably no clearer to themselves,—thus much

[1] "We can," says Pearson, "no otherwise expound this article teaching the resurrection of the body, than by asserting that the same bodies which have lived and died shall live again; that the same flesh which is corrupted shall be restored." Again, "That the same body, not any other, shall be raised to life which died, that the same flesh which was separated from the soul at the day of death shall be united to the soul at the last day," &c.—Pearson on the Creed, Art. xi.

is certain, that *our* " resurrection of the body " can bear no similarity to Christ's resurrection of the body ;—for his body remained only a few hours in the grave, and, we are expressly told, " did not see corruption," and ours, we know, remains there for untold years, and moulders away into the original elements of its marvellous chemistry.

We conclude, then, as before :—that as we cannot hope to rise, as Christ is said to have done, with our own present uncorrupted body, his resurrection, if it were a reanimation of his earthly frame, can be no argument, proof, pledge, pattern, or foreshadowing of our own. If, on the contrary, his resurrection were spiritual, and his appearances to his disciples mental and apparitionary only, they would, *pro tanto*, countenance the idea of a future state. Our *interest*, therefore, as waiters and hopers for an immortality, would appear to lie in *dis*believing the letter of the Scripture narratives.

CHAPTER XV.

IS CHRISTIANITY A REVEALED RELIGION ?

HAVING now arrived at this point of our inquiry, let us pause and cast a summary glance on the ground over which we have travelled, and the conclusions at which we have arrived. We have found that the popular doctrine of Scriptural Inspiration rests on no foundation whatever, but is a gratuitous as well as an untenable assumption. We have seen that neither the books of Moses nor the laws of Moses were the production of the great Leader and Lawgiver whose name they bear. We have seen ample reason for concluding that a belief in One only Supreme God was not the primary religion either of the Hebrew nation or the Hebrew priests; but that their Theism—originally limited and impure—was gradually elevated and purified into perfect and exclusive monotheism, by the influence of their Poets and Sages, and the progressive advance of the people in intelligence and civilization. We have discovered that their Prophets were Poets and Statesmen, not Predictors—and that none of their writings contain a single prediction which was originally designed by them, or can be honestly interpreted by us, to foretell the appearance and career of Jesus of Nazareth. What have been commonly regarded as such, are happy and *applicable quotations:* but no more. We have seen further that none of the four histories of Christ which have come down to us, are completely and effectively faithful ;—that while they are ample and adequate for showing us what

Christ was, and what was the essence and spirit of his teaching, we yet do not possess sufficient certainty that they record, in any special instance, the precise words or actions of Christ, to warrant us in building upon those words or actions doctrines revolting to our uncorrupted instincts and our cultivated sense. We have found, moreover, that the Apostles—wise and good men as they were—were yet most imperfect and fallible expounders of the mind of their departed Lord. We have seen that miracles—even where the record of them is adequate and above suspicion, if any such case there be—are no sufficient guarantee of the truth of the doctrines preached by the worker of those wonders. And finally, we have been compelled to conclude that not only is the resurrection of our Lord, as narrated in the Gospels, encumbered with too many difficulties and contradictions to be received as unquestionable, but that it is far from having the dogmatic value usually attached to it, as a pledge and foreshowing of our own.

But however imperfect may be the records we possess of Christ's Ministry, this imperfection does not affect the nature or authority of his mission. Another great question, therefore, here opens before us:—"Was Christ a divinely-commissioned Teacher of Truth?" In other words, "Is Christianity to be regarded as a Religion revealed by God to man through Christ?"

What is the meaning which, in ordinary theological parlance, we attach to the words "Divine Revelation?" What do we intend to signify when we say that "God spoke" to this Prophet, or to that saint?

We are all of us conscious of thoughts which *come to us*—which are not, properly speaking, *our own*—which we do not create, do not elaborate;—flashes of light, glimpses of truth, or of what seems to us such, brighter and sublimer than commonly dwell in our minds, which we are not conscious of having *wrought out* by any process of inquiry or meditation. These are frequent and brilliant in proportion to the intellectual gifts and spiritual elevation of the individual: they may well be termed inspirations—revelations; but it is not such as these that we mean when we speak of the Revelation by Christ.

Those who look upon God as a Moral Governor, as well as an original Creator,—a God at hand, not a God afar off in

the distance of infinite space, and in the remoteness of past or future eternity,—who conceive of Him as taking a watchful and presiding interest in the affairs of the world, and as influencing the hearts and actions of men,—believe that through the workings of the Spirit He has spoken to many, has whispered His will to them, has breathed great and true thoughts into their minds, has "wrought mightily" within them, has, in the secret communings and the deep visions of the night, caused His Spirit to move over the troubled waters of their souls, and educed light and order from the mental chaos. These are the views of many religious minds;—but these are not what we mean when we speak of the Revelation made by God to Christ.

Those, again, who look upon God as the great artificer of the world of life and matter, and upon man, with his wonderful corporeal and mental frame, as his direct work, conceive the same idea in a somewhat modified and more material form. They believe that He has made men with different intellectual capacities; and has endowed some with brains so much larger and finer than those of ordinary men, as to enable them to see and originate truths which are hidden from the mass; and that when it is His will that Mankind should make some great step forward, should achieve some pregnant discovery, He calls into being some cerebral organization of more than ordinary magnitude and power, as that of David, Isaiah, Plato, Shakspeare, Bacon, Newton, Luther, Pascal, which gives birth to new ideas and grander conceptions of the truths vital to humanity. But we mean something essentially distinct from this when we speak of Christ as the Teacher of a Religion revealed to him by his Father.

When a Christian affirms Christianity to be a "revealed religion," he intends simply and without artifice to declare his belief that the doctrines and precepts which Christ taught were not the production of his own (human) mind, either in its ordinary operations, or in its flights of sublimest contemplation; but were directly and supernaturally communicated to him from on high [1]. He means this, or he means nothing

[1] Those who believe that Christ was God—if any such really exist—must of course hold that everything he taught was, *ipso facto*, a divine revelation. With such all argument and inquiry is necessarily superseded.

definable and distinctive. What grounds have we, then, for adopting such an opinion?

It is evident that, if the conclusions to which our previous investigations have led us be correct, our only arguments for believing Christianity to be a divine revelation in contradistinction to a human conception, must be drawn from the *superhumanity* of its nature and contents. What human intellect could ascertain, it would be superfluous for God to reveal. The belief of Christ himself that his teaching "was not his, but his Father's,"—even if we were certain that he used these precise words, and intended them to convey precisely the meaning we attach to them,—could not suffice us, for the reasons assigned in the first chapter of this work. The belief in communications with the Deity has in all ages been common to the most exalted and poetical order of religious minds. The fact that Christ held a conviction which he shared with the great and good of other times, can be no argument for ascribing to him divine communications distinct from those granted to the great and good of other times. It remains, therefore, a simple question for our consideration, whether the doctrines and precepts taught by Jesus are so new, so profound, so perfect, so distinctive, so above and beyond parallel, that they could not have emanated naturally from a clear, pure, powerful, meditative mind,—living four hundred years after Socrates and Plato—brought up among the pure Essenes, nourished on the wisdom of Solomon, the piety of David, the poetry of Isaiah—elevated by the knowledge, and illuminated by the love, of the one true God.

Now on this subject we hope our confession of faith will be acceptable to all save the narrowly orthodox. It is difficult, without exhausting superlatives, even to unexpressive and wearisome satiety, to do justice to our intense love, reverence, and admiration, for the character and teaching of Jesus. We regard him not as the perfection of the intellectual or philosophic mind, but as the perfection of the spiritual character,—as surpassing all men of all times in the closeness and depth of his communion with the Father. In reading his sayings, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest Being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity. In studying his life we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth. "Blessed be God that

so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of divine life have risen in the world of man!"

But these convictions—strong, deep-seated, and ever increasing as they are—do not bring us to the conclusion that either the rare moral or mental superiorities of Jesus were supernatural endowments, in the common acceptation of the word. The Old Testament *contained* his teaching; it was reserved for him to elicit, publish, and enforce it. A thoughtful perusal of Job, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah will show beyond question the germs of those views which in the purer and sublimer genius of Christ rose to so high an elevation[1]. The doctrine of a future world, though not enforced, perhaps probably not found, in the Old Testament, was we know currently believed among the Jews before the time of Jesus, and must have been familiar to him from his infancy. We have no hesitation in concluding that a pure and powerful mind, filled with warm affections and devotional feelings, and studying the Hebrew Scriptures *discriminatively*, appropriating and assimilating what was good and noble, and rejecting what was mean and low, could and might naturally arrive at the conclusion which Jesus reached, as to the duties of men, the attributes of God, and the relation of man to God. Christianity is distinguished from Judaism rather by what it excluded than by what it added. It is an eclecticism and an expansion of the best elements of its predecessor. It selects the grand, the beautiful, the tender, the true, and ignores or suppresses the exclusive, the narrow, the corrupt, the coarse, and the vindictive. It is Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, purified and developed. If this be so, then the supposition that Christianity was supernaturally communicated, falls to the ground as needless, and therefore inadmissible. What man could discover naturally, God would not communicate supernaturally.

But we may go further. Not only is there no necessity

[1] A quotation of texts is scarcely the right mode of proving this. See Hennell for an exposition of how much of Christianity was already extant in Jewish teaching; also Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, ii. 376. But it must not be forgotten that though many of the Christian precepts were *extant* before the time of Jesus, yet it is to him that *we* owe them; to the energy, the beauty, the power of his teaching, and still more to the sublime life he led, which was a daily and hourly exposition and enforcement of his teaching.

for supposing that Christ's views as to God and duty were supernaturally revealed to him, but there is almost a necessity for adopting an opposite conclusion. If they were the elaboration of his own mind, we may well imagine that they may contain some admixture of error and imperfection. If they were revealed to him by God, this could not be the case. If, therefore, we find that Jesus was in error in any point either of his practical or his speculative teaching, our conclusion, hitherto a probability, becomes a certainty. It is evident that we could treat of this point with far more satisfaction if we were in a position to pronounce with perfect precision what Christ did, and what he did not, teach. But as we have seen that many words are put into his mouth which he never uttered, we cannot ascertain this as undoubtedly as is desirable. There must still remain some degree of doubt as to whether the errors and imperfections which we detect, originated with or were shared by Christ, or whether they were wholly attributable to his followers and historians.

There are, however, some matters on which the general concurrence of the evangelical histories, and their undesigned and incidental intimations, lead us to conclude that Jesus did share the mistakes which prevailed among his disciples, though, in going even so far as this, we speak with great diffidence. He appears to have held erroneous views respecting demoniacal possession, the interpretation of Scripture[1], his own Messiahship, his second coming, and the approaching end of the world. At least, if he held the views ascribed to him (and the preponderance of evidence is in favour of the assumption that he did), we know that on these topics he was mistaken. Now if he was so in error, his teaching could not have been a revelation from the God of truth, in the sense in which Christendom employs that phrase.

But we now come upon another question, which if answered in the negative, at once closes the inquiry to which

[1] See on this subject chap. vii. Perhaps the most singular instance of this misinterpretation of Scripture is in the sophistical argument ascribed to Christ, concerning the supposed address of David to the Messiah. "The Lord said unto my Lord," &c. (Matth. xxii. 41, and parallel passage.) It appears clear that this Psalm was not composed by David, but was addressed *to* David by Nathan, or some Court Prophet, on the occasion of some of his signal victories.—See "Hebrew Monarchy," p. 92. David did not call the Messiah "Lord;" it was the Poet that called David "Lord."

this chapter is devoted. "Is the revelation of an undiscoverable truth possible?" That is, "Can any doctrine be taught by God to man—be supernaturally infused, that is, into his mind, which he might not by the employment of his own faculties have discerned or elicited?" In other words, "Can the human mind *receive* an idea which it could not *originate?*" We think it plain that it cannot; though the subject is one which may be better illuminated by reflection than by discussion. At least it is difficult to conceive the nature and formation of that intellect which can comprehend and grasp a truth when presented to it, and perceive that it is a truth, and which yet could not, in the course of time and under favourable conditions, work out that truth by the ordinary operation of its own powers. It appears to us that, by the very nature of the statement, the faculties necessary for the one mental process must be competent to the other.[1] If an idea (and a truth is only an idea, or a combination of ideas, which approves itself to us,) can find entrance into the mind and take up its abode there, does not this very fact show *a fitness for the residence of that idea?*—a fitness, therefore, which would have insured admittance to the idea if suggested in any of those mental processes which we call thought, or by any of those combinations of occurrences which we call accident—a fitness, therefore, which, as the course of time and the occurrence of a thousand such possible suggesting accidents must almost necessarily have ensured the *presentation* of the idea, would also have ensured its *reception?* If, on the other hand, the idea, from its strangeness, its immensity, its want of harmony with the nature and existing furniture of the mind, could never have presented itself naturally, would not the same strangeness, the same vastness, the same incompatibility of essence, incapacitate the mind from receiving it if presented supernaturally?

"Revealed religion," says one of our acutest writers, "is

[1] It may be objected that external *facts* may be revealed which could not be discovered. We may be assured by revelation that the inhabitants of Saturn have wings or have no heads, but then we do not recognize the truth of the assurance. We may be assured by revelation of the existence of a future world; but could we receive the assurance unless our minds were already so prepared for it, or so constituted, that it would naturally have occurred to them?

assumption of some truths, and an *anticipation* or *confirmation* of others. . . . . It is obvious that a truth which is announced from heaven in one age, may be discovered by man in another. A truth is a real and actual relation of things subsisting somewhere,—either in the ideas within us, or the objects without us,—and capable therefore of making itself clear to us by evidence either demonstrative or moral. We may not yet have advanced to the point of view from which it opens upon us; but a progressive knowledge must bring us to it; and we shall then see that which hitherto was sustained by authority, resting on its natural support; we shall behold it, indeed, in the same light in which it has all along appeared to the superior Intelligence who rendered it to our belief. Thus revelation is an anticipation only of Science; a forecast of future intellectual and moral achievements; a provisional authority for governing the human mind, till the regularly-constituted powers can be organized." In this case it is evident that the question whether a truth were discovered or revealed, depends upon a previous inquiry; viz., whether the truth were too far before the age to have been discovered by that age? and if so, whether the Teacher of it were not far enough before his age to make the truth which was hidden from his contemporaries visible to him? It thus becomes a mere question of time and degree; and what is justly called a revelation now, would be justly called a discovery a century hence. It is obvious that this is too narrow and shifting a ground to form a safe foundation for a theory of revelation.

Further,—We are at a loss to imagine how a man can *distinguish* between an idea revealed to him and an idea conceived by him. In what manner and by what sure token, can it be made clear to him that a thought came to him from without, not arose within? He may perceive that it is resplendently bright—unquestionably new; he may be quite unconscious of any process of ratiocination or meditation by which it can have been originated; but this is no more than may be said of half the ideas of profound and contemplative genius. Shall we say that it was breathed into him "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man;" and that, therefore, he assumes that it is not his, but God's? Yet what is this but to declare that God chooses for his communications with the mind of man the period of

its most unquestionable imperfection, when the phantasy is rampant and the judgment is torpid and in abeyance?—Shall we say that the thought was spoken to him aloud, in the ordinary language of humanity, and that, therefore, he knows it to have been a divine communication, not a human conception? But what singular logic is this! Is the voice of God, then, only, or then most, recognizable when it borrows the language of man? Is that feeble instrument of thought and utterance, invented by man's faulty faculties, God's best and surest mode of communication with the spirit he has created? Nay, is not imperfect language an *impossible* medium for the conveyance of absolute and infinite truth? And do we really mean that we feel *certain* it is God's voice which we hear from the clouds, and *doubtful* that it is his which speaks to us silently, and in the deep and sacred musings of the Soul? We cannot intend to maintain this monstrous thesis.

Our reflections, then, bring us to this conclusion:—that the only certain proof we can have of a revelation must lie in the truths it teaches being such as are inaccessible to, and therefore incomprehensible by, the mind of man; that if they are such as he can conceive and grasp and accept, they are such as he might have discovered, and he has no means of knowing that he has not discovered them; if they are such as he could not have discovered, they are such as he cannot receive—such as he could not recognize or ascertain to be truth.

Since, then, we can find no adequate reason for believing Jesus to be the Son of God, nor his doctrines to be a direct and special revelation to him from the Most High—using these phrases in their ordinary signification—in what light *do* we regard Christ and Christianity?

We do not believe that Christianity contains anything which a genius like Christ's, brought up and nourished as his had been, might not have disentangled for itself. We hold that God has so arranged matters in this beautiful and well-ordered, but mysteriously-governed universe, that one great mind after another will arise from time to time, as such are needed, to discover and flash forth before the eyes of men the truths that are wanted, and the amount of truth that can be borne. We conceive that this is effected by endowing them—or (for we pretend to no scholastic nicety

of expression) by having arranged that Nature and the course of events shall send them into the world endowed —with that superior mental and moral organization, in which grand truths, sublime gleams of spiritual light, will spontaneously and inevitably arise. Such a one we believe was Jesus of Nazareth—the most exalted religious genius whom God ever sent upon the earth; in himself an embodied revelation; humanity in its divinest phase—"God manifest in the flesh," according to Eastern hyperbole; an exemplar vouchsafed, in an early age of the World, of what man may and should become, in the course of ages, in his progress towards the realization of his destiny; an individual gifted with a glorious intellect, a noble soul, a fine organization, and a perfectly-balanced moral being; and who, by virtue of these endowments, saw further than all other men—

> "Beyond the verge of that blue sky
> Where God's sublimest secrets lie;"

an earnest, not only of what humanity may be, but of what it will be, when the most perfected races shall bear the same relation to the finest minds of existing times, as these now bear to the Bushmen or the Esquimaux. He was, as Parker beautifully expresses it, "the possibility of the race made real." He was a sublime poet, prophet, hero, and philosopher; and had the usual fate of such—misrepresented by his enemies—misconstrued by his friends; unhappy in this, that his nearest intimates and followers were not of a calibre to understand him; happy in this, that his words contained such undying seeds of truth as could survive even the media through which they passed. Like the wheat found in the Egyptian Catacombs, they retain the power of germinating undiminished, whenever their appropriate soil is found. They have been preserved almost pure, notwithstanding the Judaic narrowness of Peter, the orthodox passions of John, and metaphysical subtleties of Paul. Everything seems to us to confirm the conclusion that we have in the Christianity of Scripture a code of beautiful, simple, sublime, profound, ***but not perfect***, truth, obscured by having come down to us by the intervention of minds far inferior to that of its Author—narrowed by their uncultivation—marred by their misapprehensions—and tarnished by their foreign admix-

tures. It is a collection of grand truths, transmitted to us by men who only half comprehended their grandeur, and imperfectly grasped their truth[1].

The question whether Christ had a *special* mission—were specially inspired by the Spirit of God—will be decided by each man according to the views he may entertain of Providence, and to the meaning which he attaches to words which, in the lips of too many, have no definite meaning at all. We are not careful to answer in this matter. We believe that God has arranged this glorious but perplexing world with a purpose, and on a plan. We hold that every man of superior capacity (if not *every* man sent upon the earth) has a duty to perform—a mission to fulfil—a baptism to be baptized with—"and how is he straitened till it be accomplished!" We feel a deep inward conviction that every great and good man possesses some portion of God's truth, to proclaim to the world, and to fructify in his own bosom. In a true and simple, but not the orthodox, sense, we believe all the pure, wise, and mighty in soul, to be inspired, and to be inspired for the instruction, advancement, and elevation of mankind. "Inspiration, like God's omnipresence, is not limited to the few writers claimed by the Jews, Christians, or Mahometans, but is coextensive with the race..... The degree of inspiration must depend upon two things: first, on the natural ability, the particular intellectual, moral, and religious endowment or genius wherewith each man is furnished by God; and next, on the use each man makes of this endowment. In one word, it depends on the man's *Quantity of Being* and his *Quantity of Obedience*. Now, as men differ widely in their natural endowments, and much more widely in their use and development thereof, there must of course be various degrees

[1] "The character of the record is such that I see not how any stress can be laid on particular actions attributed to Jesus. That he lived a divine life, suffered a violent death, taught and lived a most beautiful religion—this seems the great fact about which a mass of truth and error has been collected. That he should gather disciples, be opposed by the Priests and Pharisees, have controversies with them—this lay in the nature of things. His loftiest sayings seem to me the most likely to be genuine. The great stress laid on the person of Jesus by his followers, shows what the person must have been; they put the person before the thing, the fact above the idea. But it is not about common men that such mythical stories are told."—Theodore Parker, Discourse, p. 188.

of inspiration, from the lowest sinner up to the loftiest saint. All men are not by birth capable of the same degree of inspiration, and by culture and acquired character they are still less capable of it. A man of noble intellect, of deep, rich, benevolent affections, is by his endowments capable of more than one less gifted. He that perfectly keeps the Soul's law, thus fulfilling the conditions of inspiration, has more than he who keeps it imperfectly; the former must receive all his soul can contain at that stage of its growth. . . . . Inspiration, then, is the consequence of a faithful use of our faculties. Each man is its subject —God its source—truth its only test. . . . . Men may call it miraculous, but nothing is more natural. It is coextensive with the faithful use of man's natural powers. . . . . Now, this inspiration is limited to no sect, age, or nation. It is wide as the world, and common as God. It is not given to a few men, in the infancy of mankind, to monopolize inspiration, and bar God out of the Soul. You and I are not born in the dotage and decay of the world. The stars are beautiful as in their prime; 'the most ancient Heavens are fresh and strong.' God is still everywhere in nature. Wherever a heart beats with love—where Faith and Reason utter their oracles—there also is God, as formerly in the hearts of seers and prophets. Neither Gerizim, nor Jerusalem, nor the soil that Jesus blessed, is so holy as the good man's heart: nothing so full of God. This inspiration is not given to the learned alone, not only to the great and wise, but to every faithful child of God. Certain as the open eye drinks in the light, do the pure in heart see God; and he that lives truly feels Him as a presence not to be put by."[1]

This, however, to minds nourished on the positive and sententious creeds of orthodox Christendom, is not enough. Truths that are written by the finger of God upon the heart of man, are not definite enough for them. Views of religion and duty wrought out by the meditations of the studious, confirmed by the allegiance of the good and wise, stamped as sterling by the response they find in every uncorrupted mind—are not *sure* enough for them. "They cannot trust God unless they have his bond *in black and white, given under oath, and attested by witnesses.*" They cling to

[1] Theodore Parker, p. 161, et seq.

dogmatic certainties, and vainly imagine such certainty to be attainable. It is this feeling which lies at the root of the distaste so generally evinced by orthodox Christians for natural religion and for free and daring theological research; and the mental defect in which it has its origin is not difficult to discover. It belongs to understandings at once dependent, indolent and timid, in which the practical predominates over the spiritual, to which external testimony is more intelligible than internal evidence—which prefer the ease derived from reposing on authority to the labour inseparable from patient and original reflection. Such men are unwilling to rest the hopes which animate them, and the principles which guide them, either on the deductions of fallible reason, or the convictions of corruptible instincts. This feeling is natural, and is shared by even the profoundest thinkers at some period or other of their progress towards that serenity of faith which is the last and highest attainment of the devout searcher after truth. But the mistake is, to conceive it *possible* to attain certainty by some change in the process of elaborating knowledge;—to imagine that any surer foundation *can* be discovered for religious belief than the deductions of the intellect and the convictions of the heart. If reason proves the existence and attributes of God—if those spiritual instincts, which we believe to be the voice of God in the soul, infuse into the mind a sense of our relation to Him, and a hope of future existence—if reason and conscience alike irresistibly point to virtue as the highest good and the destined end and aim of man,—we doubt, we hesitate, we tremble at the possibility of a mistake; we cry out that this is not certainty, and that on anything short of certainty our souls cannot rest in peace. But if we are told, on the authority of ancient history, that some centuries ago a saint and sage came into the world, and assured his hearers that they had one God and Father who commanded virtue as a law, and promised futurity as a reward; and that this sage, to prove that he was divinely authorized to preach such doctrines, wrought miracles (which must have been either contraventions of God's laws, or anticipations of future developments of science), which fallible disciples witnessed, and which fallible narrators have transmitted—then we bow our heads in satisfied acquiescence, and feel that we have

attained the unmistakable, unquestionable, infallible certainty we sought. What is this but the very spirit of Hindoo Mythology, which is not contented till it has found a resting-place for the Universe, yet is content to rest it on an elephant, or on a tortoise!

The same fallible human reason is the foundation of our whole superstructure in the one case equally as in the other. The only difference is, that in the one case we apply that reason to the evidence for the doctrine itself;—in the other case we apply it to the credentials of the individual who is said to have taught that doctrine. But is it possible we can so blind ourselves as to believe that reason can ever give us half the assurance that Matthew is correct when he tells us that Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount and fed 5000 men with five loaves and two fishes—as it gives us that a mighty and benevolent Maker formed the Universe and its inhabitants, and made man "the living to praise him"? What should we think of the soundness of that man's understanding, who should say, "I have studied the wonders of the Heavens, the framework of the Earth, the mysterious beauties and adaptations of animal existence, the moral and material constitution of the human creature, who is so fearfully and wonderfully made; and I have risen from the contemplation unsatisfied and uncertain *whether* God is, and *what* He is. Bnt I have carefully examined the four Gospels, weighed their discrepancies, collated their reports,—and the result is a perfect certainty that Christ was the miraculous Son of God, commissioned to make known His existence, to reveal His will, to suspend His laws. It is *doubtful* whether a wise and good Being be the Author of the starry heavens above me, and the moral world within me;—but it is *unquestionable* that Jesus walked upon the water, and raised the Widow's Son at Nain. I may be mistaken in the one deduction:—I cannot be mistaken in the other." Strange conformation of mind! which can find no adequate foundation for its hopes, its worship, its principles of action, in the far-stretching universe, in the glorious firmament, in the deep, full soul, bursting with unutterable thoughts—yet can rest all, with a trusting simplicity approaching the sublime, on what a book relates of the sayings and doings of a man who lived eighteen centuries ago!

If the change which resulted from our inquiries were indeed a descent from certainty to probability, it would involve a loss beyond all power of compensation. But it is not so. It is merely an exchange of conclusions founded on one chain of reasoning for conclusions founded on another. The plain truth—if we dared but look it in the face—is this:—that absolute certainty on these subjects is not attainable, and was not intended. We have already seen that no miraculous revelation could make doctrines credible which are revolting to our reason; nor can any revelation give to doctrines greater certainty than that which attaches to its own origin and history. Now, we cannot conceive the proofs of any miraculous revelation to be so perfect, flawless, and cogent, as are the proofs of the great doctrines of our faith, independent of miracle or revelation. Both set of proofs must, philosophically speaking, be *imperfect;*—but the proof that any particular individual was supernaturally inspired by God, must always be *more* imperfect than the proof that Man and the Universe are the production of His fiat; that goodness is His profoundest essence; that doing good is the noblest worship we can pay Him. To seek that more cogent and compelling certainty of these truths which orthodoxy yearns after, is to strive for a shadow:—to fancy that we have attained it, is to be satisfied with having affixed Man's indorsement to "the true sayings of God."[1]

In grasping after this shadow, ordinary Christianity has lost the substance:—it has sacrificed in practical, more than it has gained in dogmatic, value. In making Christ the miraculous Son of God, it has destroyed Jesus as a human exemplar. If he were in a peculiar manner "the only begotten of the Father," a partaker in his essential nature, then he is immeasurably removed from us;—we may revere,

[1] "Having removed the offence we took in fancying God speaking with a human voice, and saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hear ye him,'—we certainly do not incline to call that a loss. But we do not lose anything else; for considering the godliness and purity of the life of Jesus, and then thinking of God and his holiness on the one side, and of our destination on the other, we know, without a positive declaration, that God must have been pleased with a life like that of Jesus, and that we cannot do better than adhere to him. We do not lose, therefore, with those voices from heaven, more than is lost by a beautiful picture from which a ticket is taken away that was fastened to it, containing the superfluous assurance of its being a beautiful picture."—Strauss's Letter to Professor Orelli, p. 20.

we cannot imitate him. We listen to his precepts with submission, perhaps even greater than before. We dwell upon the excellence of his character, no longer for imitation, but for worship. We read with the deepest love and admiration of his genius, his gentleness, his mercy, his unwearying activity in doing good, his patience with the stupid, his compassion for the afflicted, his courage in facing torture, his meekness in enduring wrong;—and then we turn away and say, "Ah! he was a God; such virtue is not for humanity, nor for us." It is useless by honeyed words to disguise the truth. If Christ were a man, he is our *pattern;* "the possibility of our race made real." If he were God—a partaker of God's nature, as the orthodox maintain—then they are guilty of a cruel mockery in speaking of him as a type, a model of human excellence. How can one endowed with the perfections of a God be an example to beings encumbered with the weaknesses of humanity? Adieu, then, to Jesus as anything but a Propounder of doctrines, an Utterer of precepts! The *vital* portion of Christianity is swept away. His *Character*—that from which so many in all ages have drawn their moral life and strength—that which so irresistibly enlists our deepest sympathies, and rouses our highest aspirations—it becomes an irreverence to speak of. The character—the conduct—the virtues—of a God!—these are felt to be indecent expressions. Verily, orthodoxy has slain the life of Christianity. In the presumptuous endeavour to exalt Jesus, it has shut him up in the Holy of Holies, and hid him from the gaze of humanity. It has displaced him from an object of imitation, into an object of worship. It has made his life barren, that his essence might be called divine.

"But *we* have no fear that we should lose Christ by being obliged to give up a considerable part of what was hitherto called Christian creed! He will remain to all of us the more surely, the less anxiously we cling to doctrines and opinions that might tempt our reason to forsake him. But if Christ remains to us, and if he remains to us as the highest we know and are capable of imagining within the sphere of religion, as the person without whose presence in the mind no perfect piety is possible,—we may fairly say that in Him do we still possess the sum and substance of the Christian faith."[1]

[1] Strauss's Soliloquies, p. 67

"But," it will be objected, "what, on this system, becomes of the religion of the poor and ignorant, the uneducated, and the busy? If Christianity is not a divine revelation, and therefore entirely and infallibly true,—if the Gospels are not perfectly faithful and accurate expositors of Christ's teaching and of God's will,—what a fearful loss to those who have neither the leisure, the learning, nor the logical habits of thought requisite to construct, out of the relics that remain to them and the nature that lies before them, a faith for themselves!"

To this objection we reply that the more religion can be shown to consist in the realization of great moral and spiritual truths, rather than in the reception of distinct dogmas, the more the position of these classes is altered for the better. In no respect is it altered for the worse. Their *creeds, i.e.* their collection of dogmas, those who do not or cannot think for themselves must always take on the authority of others. They do so now: they have always done so. They have hitherto believed certain doctrines because wise and good men assure them that these doctrines were revealed by Christ, and that Christ was a Teacher sent from God. They will in future believe them because wise and good men assure them of their truth, and their own hearts confirm the assurance. The only difference lies in this:—that in the one case, the authority on which they lean vouches for the truth; in the other, for the Teacher who proclaimed it.

Moreover, the Bible still remains; though no longer as an inspired and infallible record. Though not the word of God, it contains the words of the wisest, the most excellent, the most devout men, who have ever held communion with Him. The poor, the ignorant, the busy, need not, and will not, read it critically. To each of them, it will still, through all time, present the Gospels and the Psalms,—the glorious purity of Jesus, the sublime piety of David and of Job. Those who read it for its spirit, not for its dogmas,—as the poor, the ignorant, the busy, *if unperverted*, will do,—will still find in it all that is necessary for their guidance in life, and their consolation in sorrow,—for their rule of duty, and their trust in God.

A more genuine and important objection to the consequences of our views is felt by indolent minds on their own account. They shrink from the toil of working out truth for themselves, out of the materials which Providence has

placed before them. They long for the precious metal, but loathe the rude ore out of which it has to be extricated by the laborious alchemy of thought. A ready-made creed is the Paradise of their lazy dreams. A string of authoritative dogmatic propositions comprises the whole mental wealth which they desire. The volume of nature — the volume of history—the volume of life—appal and terrify them. Such men are the materials out of whom good Catholics—of all sects—are made. They form the uninquiring and submissive flocks which rejoice the hearts of all Priesthoods. Let such cling to the faith of their forefathers —if they can. But men whose minds are cast in a nobler mould and are instinct with a diviner life,—who love truth more than rest, and the peace of Heaven rather than the peace of Eden,—to whom "a loftier being brings severer cares,"—

> "Who know, Man does not live by joy alone,
> But by the presence of the power of God,"—

such must cast behind them the hope of any repose or tranquillity save that which is the last reward of long agonies of thought[1]; they must relinquish all prospect of any Heaven save that of which tribulation is the avenue and portal; they must gird up their loins, and trim their lamp, for a work which cannot be put by, and which must not be negligently done. "He," says Zschokke, "who does not like living in the *furnished lodgings of tradition*, must build his own house, his own system of thought and faith, for himself."[2]

[1] "O Thou! to whom the wearisome disease
Of Past and Present is an alien thing,
Thou pure Existence! whose severe decrees
Forbid a living man his soul to bring
Into a timeless Eden of sweet ease,
Clear-eyed, clear-hearted—lay thy loving wing
In death upon me—if that way alone
Thy great Creation-thought thou wilt to me make known."

R. M. Milnes.

[2] Zschokke's Autobiography, p. 29. The whole section is most deeply interesting.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRISTIAN ECLECTICISM.

CHRISTIANITY not being a revelation, but a conception—the Gospels not being either inspired or accurate, but fallible and imperfect human records—the practical conclusion from such premises must be obvious to all. Every doctrine and every proposition which the Scriptures contain, whether or not we believe it to have come to us unmutilated and unmarred from the mouth of Christ, is open, and must be subjected, to the scrutiny of reason. Some tenets we shall at once accept as the most perfect truth that can be received by the human intellect and heart;—others we shall reject as contradicting our instincts and offending our understandings;—others, again, of a more mixed nature, we must analyze, that so we may extricate the seed of truth from the husk of error, and elicit "the divine idea that lies at the bottom of appearance."[1]

I. I value the Religion of Jesus, not as being absolute and perfect truth, but as containing more truth, purer truth, higher truth, stronger truth, than has ever yet been given to man. Much of his teaching I unhesitatingly receive as, to the best of my judgment, unimprovable and unsurpassable—fitted, if obeyed, to make earth a Paradise indeed, and man only a little lower than the angels. *The worthlessness of ceremonial observances, and the necessity of active virtue*—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven;" "By their fruits ye shall know them;" "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" "Be not a slothful hearer only, but a

[1] Fichte.

doer of the word;" "Woe unto ye, Scribes and Pharisees, for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the Law, justice, mercy, and temperance:"—*The enforcement of purity of heart as the security for purity of life, and of the government of the thoughts, as the originators and forerunners of action*—"He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" "Out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man:"—*Universal philanthropy*—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, that do ye also unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets:"—*Forgiveness of injuries*—"Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;" "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us;" "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" "If ye love them only that love you, what reward have ye? do not even publicans the same?"—*The necessity of self-sacrifice in the cause of duty*—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake;" "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me;" "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee;" "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God:"—*Humility*—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant:"—*Genuine sincerity; being, not seeming*—"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them;" "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut thy door;" "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast:"—all these sublime precepts need no miracle, no voice from the clouds, to recommend them to our allegiance, or to assure us of their divinity; they command obedience by virtue of their inherent rectitude and beauty, and vindicate their author as himself the one towering perpetual miracle of history.

II. Next in perfection come the views which Christianity unfolds to us of God in his relation to man, which were

probably as near the truth as the minds of men could in that age receive. God is represented as Our *Father* in Heaven—to be whose especial children is the best reward of the peace-makers—to see whose face is the highest hope of the pure in heart—who is ever at hand to strengthen His true worshippers—to whom is due our heartiest love, our humblest submission—whose most acceptable worship is a holy heart—in whose constant presence our life is passed—to whose merciful disposal we are resigned by death. It is remarkable that, throughout the Gospels, with the exception of a simple passage[1], nothing is said as to the *nature* of the Deity:—His *relation* to us is alone insisted on:—all that is needed for our consolation, our strength, our guidance, is assured tc us:—the purely speculative is passed over and ignored.

Thus, in the two great points essential to our practical life—viz. our feelings towards God, and our conduct towards man—the Gospels contain little about which men can differ—little from which they can dissent[2]. He is our Father, we are all brethren. This much lies open to the most ignorant and busy, as fully as to the most leisurely and learned. This needs no Priest to teach it—no authority to indorse it. The rest is Speculation—intensely interesting, indeed, but of no practical necessity.

III. There are, however, other tenets taught in Scripture and professed by Christians, in which reflective minds of all ages have found it difficult to acquiesce. Thus:—however far we may stretch the plea for a liberal interpretation of Oriental speech, it is impossible to disguise from ourselves that the New Testament teaches, in the most unreserved manner, and in the strongest language, the doctrine of *the efficacy of Prayer* in modifying the divine purposes, and in obtaining the boons asked for at the throne of grace. It is

[1] God is a Spirit.

[2] That, however, there must be some radical defect, or incompleteness, or inapplicability, in our day and country, of the Gospel rule of life, appears from the fact that any one who *strictly* regulates his conduct by its teaching (putting aside the mere letter) is immediately led into acts which the world unanimously regards as indicative of an unsound or unbalanced mind; that in fact the very attempt indicates a mental constitution or condition so peculiar, so intrinsically unfit for the business of life, as to constitute what is universally admitted to be unsoundness. Most men who profess to take the Gospel as their guide, escape this unsoundness, or keep it within permissible bounds, by inconsistency, or artificial interpretations.

true that one passage (John xi. 42) would seem to indicate that prayer was a form which Jesus adopted for the sake of others; it is also remarkable that the model of prayer, which he taught to his disciples, contains only one simple and modest request for personal and temporal good[1]; yet not only are we told that he prayed earnestly and for specific mercies (though with a most submissive will), on occasions of peculiar suffering and trial, but few of his exhortations to his disciples occur more frequently than that to constant prayer, and no promises are more distinct or reiterated than that their prayers shall be heard and answered. "Watch and pray;" "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting;" "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them;" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you;" "Ask, and it shall be given you;" "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" The parable of the unjust Judge was delivered to enforce the same conclusion, and the writings of the Apostles are at least equally explicit on this point. "Be constant in prayer;" "Pray without ceasing;" "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering;" "The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

No one can read such passages, and the numberless others of a similar character with which both Testaments abound, and doubt that the opinion held both by Christ and his disciples was that "Jehovah is a God that heareth and answereth prayer;"—that favours are to be obtained from Him by earnest and reiterated entreaty; that whatever good thing His sincere worshippers petition for, with *instance* and with faith, shall be granted to them, if consonant to his purposes, and shall be granted *in consequence* of their petition; that, in fact and truth, apart from all metaphysical subtleties and subterfuges, the designs of God can be modified and swayed, like those of an earthly father, by the entreaties of His children. This doctrine is set forth throughout the Jewish Scriptures in its coarsest and nakedest form, and it reappears in the

[1] "It is a curious fact that the Lord's Prayer may be reconstructed," says Wetstein, "almost verbatim out of the Talmud, which also contains a prophetic intimation that all prayer will one day cease, except the prayer of Thanksgiving." (Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, ii. 379.)

Christian Scriptures in a form only slightly modified and refined.

Now, this doctrine has in all ages been a stumbling-block to the thoughtful. It is obviously irreconcilable with all that reason and revelation teach us of the divine nature; and the inconsistency has been felt by the ablest of the Scripture writers themselves[1]. Various and desperate have been the expedients and suppositions resorted to, in order to reconcile the conception of an immutable, all-wise, all-foreseeing God, with that of a father who is turned from his course by the prayers of his creatures. But all such efforts are, and are felt to be, hopeless failures. They involve the assertion and negation of the same proposition in one breath. The problem remains still insoluble; and we must either be content to leave it so, or we must abandon one or other of the hostile premises.

The religious man, who believes that all events, mental as well as physical, are pre-ordered and arranged according to the degrees of infinite wisdom, and the philosopher, who knows that, by the wise and eternal laws of the universe, cause and effect are indissolubly chained together, and that one follows the other in inevitable succession,—equally feel that this ordination—this chain—cannot be changeable at the cry of man. To suppose that it can is to place the whole harmonious system of nature at the mercy of the weak reason and the selfish wishes of humanity. If the purposes of God were not wise, they would not be formed:—if wise, they cannot be changed, for then they would become unwise. To suppose that an all-wise Being would alter his designs and modes of proceeding at the entreaty of an unknowing creature, is to believe that compassion would change his wisdom into foolishness. It has been urged that prayer may render a favour wise, which would else be unwise; but this is to imagine that events are not foreseen and pre-ordered, but are arranged and decided *pro re natâ*: it is also to ignore utterly the unquestionable fact, that no event in life or in nature is isolated, and that none can be changed without entailing endless and universal alterations[2]. If the universe is go-

[1] "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent."

[2] "Immediate proof of that system of interminable connection which binds together the whole human family, may be obtained by every one who will

verned by fixed laws, or (which is the same proposition in different language) if all events are pre-ordained by the foreseeing wisdom of an infinite God, then the prayers of thousands of years and generations of martyrs and saints cannot change or modify one iota of our destiny. The proposition is unassailable by the subtlest logic[1]. The weak, fond affections of humanity struggle in vain against the unwelcome conclusion.

It *is* a conclusion from which the feelings of almost all of us shrink and revolt. The strongest sentiment of our nature, perhaps, is that of our helplessness in the hands of fate, and against this helplessness we seek for a resource in the belief of our dependence on a Higher Power, which can control and will interfere with fate. And though our reason tells us that it is inconceivable that the entreaties of creatures as erring and as blind as we are, can influence the all-wise purposes of God, yet we feel an internal voice, more eloquent than reason, which assures us that to pray to Him in trouble is an irrepressible instinct of our nature—an instinct which precedes teaching—which survives experience—which defies philosophy.

> "For sorrow oft the cry of faith
> In bitter need will borrow."

examine the several ingredients of his physical, intellectual, and social condition; for he will not find one of these circumstances of his lot that is not directly an effect or consequence of the conduct, or character, or constitution of his progenitors, and of all with whom he has had to do; if *they* had been other than what they were, he *also* must have been other than he is. And then our predecessors must in like manner trace the qualities of their being to theirs; thus the linking ascends to the common parents of all; and thus must it descend—still spreading as it goes—from the present to the last generation of the children of Adam."—Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm, p. 149.

[1] The author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm has a singular theory on this point. He is not very clear, because clearness would make his inconsistency and the strangeness of his position too manifest; but as far as we can decipher his notion, it is this: He divides all events into two classes—the certain and fortuitous. He conceives, as well as we do, that the great mass of events occur according to established laws, and in the regular process of causation: and these he regards as settled and immutable: but in addition to these he considers that there are many others which are mere *fortuities*, at the command of God's will and of man's prayers; and that these fortuities are the special province and *means* of the divine government" (chap. vi.). Yet this writer allows that all events and all men's lots are inextricably woven together (pp. 132, 149); how then can one thing be more fortuitous or alterable than another? Moreover, fortuity, as he elsewhere intimates, is merely an expression denoting our ignorance of causation: that which seems a chance to us is among the most settled and certain of God's ordainments.

It would be an unspeakable consolation to our human infirmity, could we, in this case, believe our reason to be erroneous, and our instinct true; but we greatly fear that the latter is the result, partly of that anthropomorphism which pervades all our religious conceptions, which our limited faculties suggest, and which education and habit have rooted so fixedly in our mental constitution,—and partly of that fond weakness which *recoils from the idea of irreversible and inescapable decree.* The conception of subjection to a law without exception, without remission, without appeal, crushing, absolute, and universal, is truly an appalling one; and, most mercifully, can rarely be perceived in all its overwhelming force, except by minds which, through stern and lofty intellectual training, have in some degree become qualified to bear it.

Communion with God, we must ever bear in mind, is something very different from *prayer for specific blessings,* and often confers the submissive strength of soul for which we pray; and we believe it will be found that the higher our souls rise in their spiritual progress, the more does entreaty merge into thanksgiving, the more does *petition* become absorbed in communion with the "Father of the spirits of all flesh." That the piety of Christ was fast tending to this end is, we think, indicated by his instructions to his disciples (Matt. vi. 8, 9); "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner, therefore, pray ye," &c. and by that last sublime sentence in Gethsemane, uttered when the agonizing struggle of the spirit with the flesh had terminated in the complete and final victory of the first, "Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done."

Prayer may be regarded as the form which devotion naturally takes in ordinary minds, and even in the most enlightened minds in their less spiritual moods. The highest intellectual efforts, the loftiest religious contemplations, dispose to devotion, but check the impulses of prayer. The devout philosopher, trained to the investigation of universal system,—the serene astronomer, fresh from the study of the changeless laws which govern innumerable worlds,—shrinks from the monstrous irrationality of asking the great Architect and Governor of all to work a miracle in his behalf—to in-

terfere, for the sake of *his* convenience, or *his* plans with, the sublime order conceived by the Ancient of Days in the far Eternity of the Past; for what is a special providence but an interference with established laws? and what is such interference but a miracle? There is much truth and beauty in the following remarks of Isaac Taylor, but much also of the inconsistency, irreverence, and insolence of orthodoxy.

"The very idea of addressing *petitions* to Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own eternal and unalterable will, and the enjoined practice of clothing sentiments of piety in articulate forms of language, though these sentiments, before they are invested in words, are perfectly known to the Searcher of hearts, imply that, in the terms and mode of intercourse with God and man, no attempt is made to lift the latter above his sphere of limited notions and imperfect knowledge. *The terms of devotional communion rest even on a much lower ground than that which man, by efforts of reason and imagination, might attain to*[1]. Prayer, by its very conditions, supposes not only a condescension of the divine nature to meet the human, *but a humbling of the human nature to a lower range than it might easily reach. The region of abstract conceptions—of lofty reasonings—of magnificent images, has an atmosphere too subtle to support the health of true piety;* and in order that the warmth and vigour of life may be maintained in the heart, the common level of the natural affections is chosen as the scene of intercourse between heaven and earth . . . The utmost distances of the material universe are finite; but the disparity of nature which separates man from his Maker is infinite; nor can the interval be filled up or brought under any process of measurement. . . . . Were it indeed permitted to man to gaze upward from step to step, and from range to range, of the vast edifice of rational existences, and could his eye attain its summit, and then perceive, at an infinite height beyond that highest platform of created beings, the lowest beams of the Eternal Throne—what liberty of heart would afterwards be left to him in drawing near to the Father of Spirits? How, after such a revelation of the upper world, could the affectionate cheerfulness of earthly worship

[1] Is it not a clear deduction from this, that prayer is a form of devotion conceded only to our imperfect spiritual capacities, and to be outgrown as those capacities are raised and strengthened?

again take place? Or how, while contemplating the measured vastness of the interval between heaven and earth, could the dwellers thereon come familiarly as before to the Hearer of Prayer; bringing with them the small requests of their petty interests of the present life . . . . . These spectacles of greatness, if laid open to perception, would present such an interminable perspective of glory, and so set out the immeasurable distance between ourselves and the Supreme Being with a long gradation of splendours, that we should henceforth feel as if thrust down to an extreme remoteness from the divine notice; and it would be hard or impossible to retain, with any comfortable conviction, the belief in the nearness of Him who is revealed as 'a very present help in every time of trouble.' . . . . . Every ambitious attempt to break through the humbling conditions on which man may hold communion with God, must then fail of success; since the Supreme has fixed the scene of worship and converse, not in the skies, but on the earth. The Scripture models of devotion, far from encouraging vague and inarticulate contemplations, consist of such utterances of desire, hope and love, as seem to suppose the existence of correlative feelings, and of every *human* sympathy in Him to whom they are addressed[1]. *And though reason and Scripture assure us that He neither needs to be informed of our wants, nor waits to be moved by our supplications, yet will He be approached with the eloquence of importunate desire, and He demands, not only a sincere feeling of indigence and dependence, but an undissembled zeal and diligence in seeking the desired boons by persevering request.* He is *to be supplicated with arguments as one who needs to be swayed and moved, to be wrought upon and influenced;* nor is any alternative offered to those who would present themselves at the throne of heavenly grace, or any exception made in favour of superior spirits, *whose more elevated notions of the divine perfections may render this accommodated style distasteful.* As the Hearer of Prayer stoops to listen, so also must the suppliant stoop from the heights of philosophical or meditative abstrac-

[1] That is, they are based on erroneous premises, supported by a natural feeling, the very feeling which, pushed a little further, has originated prayers to Christ in the English Church, and to Saints and to the Virgin Mary in the Roman Communion.

tions, and either come in genuine simplicity of petition, as a son to a father, *or be utterly excluded from the friendship of his Maker.*"[1]

The expressions in this last paragraph—those particularly which we have italicised—appear to us, we confess, monstrous, and little, if at all, short of blasphemy, *i.e.* speaking evil of God. What! He, who "both by reason and Scripture" has taught us that He is *not* moved by our supplications, requires us—"on pain of being utterly excluded from his favour"—to act as if He were! He, who has given us the understanding to conceive His entire exemption from all human weaknesses, requires us to proceed as if we "thought that He was altogether such a one as ourselves"! He, who has made us to know that all things are ordered by Him from the beginning—"that with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—requires us to supplicate, "argue," importune, *as if we believed* that supplication, argument, and importunity could sway and turn Him from His purposes,—commands us, in a word, to enact in His august presence a comedy, which He knows, and we know, to be a mockery and a farce! He, who has given us, as His divinest gift, to elevate, to perfect, and to purify, an intellect bearing some faint analogy to His own, —punishes with "exclusion from His friendship," those nobler conceptions of His nature which are the finest achievements of this intellect, unless we consent to abnegate and disavow them, *or pretend that we do so!*—for this appears to be the signification of the last sentence we have quoted. Such are the bewildering positions into which Orthodoxy drives its more intellectual disciples!

The following remarks are thrown out rather as suggestions for thought than as digested reflections, but they may contain a clue to some truth.

The inadmissibility of the idea of the bonâ fide efficacy of prayer, would appear to be enforced rather by our conviction that all things in life are arranged by *law*, than by a belief in the foreknowledge (which in a supreme Being is equivalent to foreordainment) of the Deity. This latter doctrine, however metaphysically true and probable, we *cannot* hold, so as to follow it out fairly to its consequences.

[1] Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm, pp. 27-32.

It negatives the free-will of man at least as peremptorily as the efficacy of prayer:—yet in the free-will of man we do believe, and must believe, however strict logic may struggle against it. Why, then, should we not also hold the efficacy of prayer?—a doctrine, *so far*, certainly not more illogical? Because if, as we cannot doubt, the immutable relation of cause and effect governs everything, in all time, through all space—then prayer—*except in those cases where it operates as a natural cause*—cannot affect the sequence of events. If bodily pain and disease be the legitimate and traceable consequence of imprudence and excess—if pleurisy or consumption follow, by natural law, exposure to inclement weather in weak frames—if neuralgia be the legal progeny of organic decay or shattered nerves—if storms follow laws as certain as the law of gravitation—how can prayer bring about the cessation of pain, or the lulling of the storm, for the relief of the suffering, or the rescue of the emperilled, man? Is not the prayer for such cessation clearly a prayer for a miracle?

Prayer may be itself *a natural* cause;—it may, by its mental intensity, suspend bodily pain:—it may, by the moral elevation it excites, confer strength to dare and to endure. Prayer, to a fellow-creature of superior power and wisdom, may induce such to apply a lenitive or a cure, which, however, is simply a natural cause, placed by our ignorance beyond our reach. If, therefore, there be around us, as many think, superior spiritual beings, our prayers, if heard by them, may induce them to aid us by means unknown to our inferior powers. But such aid would then be the natural result of natural though obscure causes. "If, however," it may be asked, "superior beings may be moved by prayer to aid us by their knowledge of natural agencies unknown to us, why not God?" The answer is: that for Prayer to be a bonâ fide effective agent in obtaining any boon, it must operate on an impressible and *mutable* will:—therefore, if there be superior intermediate beings, sharing human sympathies and imperfections, but possessing more than human powers and knowledge—prayer may secure their aid; but not that of a supreme God. Still, the question remains much one of *fact:—are* our prayers—*are* the most earnest prayers of the wisest, the best, the most suffering—generally answered? Does toothache or

sciatica last a shorter time with those who *pray*, than with those who only *bear*?

On the whole, however, we are content that man should rest in the Christian practice, though not in the Christian theory, of Prayer—just as we are obliged to rest satisfied with a conception of Deity, which, though utterly erroneous in the sight of God, and consciously imperfect even in our own, is yet the nearest approach to truth our minds can frame, and practically adequate to our necessities. The common doctrine we cannot but regard as one of those fictions which imperfect and unchastened man is fain to gather round him, to equalize his strength with the requirements of his lot, but which a stronger nature might dispense with;—one of those fictions which may be considered as the imperfect expression—the approximative formula—of mighty and eternal verities.

IV. Remotely connected with the doctrine of an interposing and influencible Providence, is the fallacy, or rather the imperfection, which lies at the root of the ordinary Christian view of *Resignation*, as a duty and a virtue. Submission, cheerful acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, is enjoined upon us, not because these dispensations are just and wise—not because they are the ordinances of His will who cannot err,—but because they are ordained for our benefit, and because He has promised that "all things shall work together for good to them that love Him." We are assured that every trial and affliction is designed solely for our good, for our discipline, and will issue in a blessing, though we see not how; and that *therefore* we must bow to it with unmurmuring resignation. These grounds, it is obvious, are purely self-regarding; and resignation, thus represented and thus motived, is no virtue, but a simple calculation of self-interest. This narrow view results from that incorrigible egotism of the human heart which makes each man prone to regard himself as the special object of divine consideration, and the centre, round which the universe revolves. Yet it is unquestionably the view most prominently and frequently presented in the New Testament[1], and by all modern divines[2]. It may be, that

[1] See especially Matt. v. 11, 12; xvi. 25–27. Romans viii. 18, 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Gal. vi. 9. There is one sublime exception, from the mouth of Christ. "The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

[2] The sublimest and purest genius among modern divines goes so far as to

the prospect of "an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory," may be needed to support our frail purposes under the crushing afflictions of our mortal lot; it may be, that, by the perfect arrangements of omnipotence, the sufferings of all may be made to work out the ultimate and supreme good of each; but this is not, cannot be, *the reason why* we should submit with resignation to whatever God ordains. His will must be equally wise, equally right, whether it allot to *us* happiness or misery: it *is* His will; we need inquire no further. Job, who had no vision of a future compensatory world, had in this attained a sublimer point of religion than St. Paul:—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "What! shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job. xiii. 15; ii. 10.)

To the orthodox Christian, who fully believes all he professes, cheerful resignation to the divine will is comparatively a natural, an easy, a simple thing. To the religious philosopher, it is the highest exercise of intellect and virtue. The man who has *realized* the faith that his own lot, in all its minutest particulars, is not only directly regulated by God,—but is so regulated by God as unerringly to work for his highest good,—with an express view to his highest good,—with such a man, resignation, patience, nay, cheerful acquiescence in all suffering and sorrow, appears to us to be in fact only the simple and practical expression of his belief. If, believing all this, he still murmurs and rebels at the trials and contrarieties of his lot, he is guilty of the childishness of the infant which quarrels with the medicine that is to lead it back to health and ease. But the religious Philosopher,—who, sincerely holding that a Supreme God created and governs this world, holds also that He governs it by laws which, though wise, just, and beneficent, are yet steady, unwavering, inexorable;—who believes that his agonies and sorrows are not specially ordained for *his* chastening, *his* strengthening, *his* elaboration and development,—but are incidental and necessary results of the operation of laws the best that

maintain that, apart from the hope of future recompense, "a deviation from rectitude would become the part of wisdom, and should the path of virtue be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and folly." (Modern Infidelity, p. 20, by Robert Hall.) It is sad to reflect how mercenary a thing duty has become in the hands of theologians. Were their belief in a future retribution once shaken, they would become, on their principles, the lowest of sensualists, the worst of sinners.

could be devised for the happiness and purification of the species,—or perhaps not even that, but the best adapted to work out the vast, awful, glorious, eternal designs of the Great Spirit of the universe;—who believes that the ordained operations of Nature, which have brought misery to him, have, from the very unswerving tranquillity of their career, showered blessing and sunshine upon every other path,—that the unrelenting chariot of Time, which has crushed or maimed him in its allotted course, is pressing onward to the accomplishment of those serene and mighty purposes, to have contributed to which—even as a victim—is an honour and a recompense;—he who takes this view of Time, and Nature, and God, and yet bears his lot without murmur or distrust, because it is portion of a system, the best possible, *because ordained by God*,—has achieved a point of virtue, the highest, amid passive excellence, which humanity can reach;—and his reward and support must be found in the reflection that he is an unreluctant and self-sacrificing co-operator with the Creator of the universe, and in the noble consciousness of being worthy, and capable, of so sublime a conception, yet so sad a destiny[1].

In a comparison of the two resignations, there is no measure of their respective grandeurs. The orthodox sufferer fights the battle only on condition of surviving to reap the fruits of victory:—the other fights on, knowing that he must fall early in the battle, but content that his body should form a stepping-stone for the future conquests of humanity[2].

[1] "'Pain is in itself an evil. It cannot be that God, who, as we know, is perfectly good, can choose us to suffer pain, unless either we are ourselves to receive from it an antidote to what is evil in ourselves, or else as such pain is a necessary part in the scheme of the universe, which as a *whole* is good. In either case I can take it thankfully. . . . . I should not be taken away without it was ordered so. . . . . Whatever creed we hold, if we believe that God is, and that he cares for his creatures, one cannot doubt that. And it would not have been ordered so without it was better either for ourselves, or for some other persons, or some things. To feel sorrow is a kind of murmuring against God's will, which is worse than unbelief.'

"'But think of the grief of those you leave.'

"'They should not allow themselves to feel it. It is a symptom of an unformed mind.'"—Shadows of the Clouds, pp. 146, 148.

This is a somewhat harshly-expressed philosophy, but full of truth.

[2] "Is selfishness—
For time, a sin—spun out to eternity
Celestial prudence? Shame! oh, thrust me forth,
Forth, Lord, from self, until I toil and die

Somewhat similar remarks may be made with reference to the virtues of action as to those of endurance. It is a matter suggestive of much reflection, that, throughout the New Testament, the loftiest and purest motive to action—love of duty *as* duty, obedience to the will of God *because* it is His will—is rarely appealed to; one or two expressions of Christ, and the 14th chapter of John, forming the only exceptions. The almost invariable language—pitched to the level of ordinary humanity—is, "Do your duty at all hazards, for your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly." "Verily, I say unto you, ye shall in no wise lose your reward."[1]

Yet this is scarcely the right view of things. The hope of success, not the hope of reward, should be our stimulating and sustaining might. Our object, not ourselves, should be our inspiring thought. The labours of philanthropy are comparatively easy, when the effect of them, and their recoil upon ourselves, is immediate and apparent. But this it can rarely be, unless where the field of our exertions is narrow, and ourselves the only or the chief labourers. In the more frequent cases where we have to join our efforts to those of thousands of others to contribute to the carrying forward of a great cause, merely to till the ground or sow the seed for a very distant harvest, or to prepare the way for the future advent of some great amendment; the amount which each man has contributed to the achievement of ultimate success, the portion of the prize which justice should assign to each as his especial production, can never be accurately ascertained. Perhaps few of those who have laboured, in the patience of secrecy and silence, to bring

> No more for Heaven or bliss, but duty, Lord—
> Duty to Thee—although my meed should be
> The Hell which I deserve."
>
> Saint's Tragedy.

[1] "When thou art bidden, take the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say, 'Friend, go up higher;' *so shalt thou have honour in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.*" "Every one that humbleth himself *shall be exalted.*" "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, ... and *all these things shall be added unto you.*" "Lord, we have left all and followed thee, *what shall we have therefore?* Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "No man that hath left father or mother for my sake but *shall receive a hundred fold more in this present life*, and *in the world to come life everlasting.*"

about some political or social change which they felt convinced would ultimately prove of vast service to humanity, may live to see the change effected, or the anticipated good flow from it. Fewer still of them will be able to pronounce what appreciable weight their several efforts contributed to the achievement of the change desired. And discouraging doubts will therefore often creep in upon minds in which egotism is not wholly swallowed up by earnestness, as to whether, in truth, their exertions had any influence whatever—whether in sad and sober fact they have not been the mere fly upon the wheel. With many men these doubts are fatal to active effort. To counteract them we must labour to elevate and purify our *motives*, as well as sedulously cherish the conviction—assuredly a true one—that in this world there is no such thing as effort thrown away—that "in all labour there is profit"—that all sincere exertion in a righteous and unselfish cause is necessarily followed, in spite of all appearance to the contrary, by an appropriate and proportionate success—that no bread cast upon the waters can be wholly lost—that no seed planted in the ground can fail to fructify in due time and measure; and that, however we may in moments of despondency be apt to doubt, not only whether our cause will triumph, but whether we shall have contributed to its triumph,—there is One who has not only seen every exertion we have made, but who can assign the exact degree in which each soldier has assisted to gain the great victory over social evil[1]. The Augæan stables of the world—the accumulated uncleanness and misery of centuries—require a mighty river to cleanse them thoroughly away: every drop we contribute aids to swell that river and augment its force, in a degree appreciable by God, though not by man;—and he whose zeal is deep and earnest, will not be over anxious that his individual drop should be distinguishable amid the mighty mass of cleansing and fertilizing waters, far less that, for the sake of distinction, it should

[1] "Yet are there some to whom a strength is given,
A Will, a self-constraining Energy,
A Faith which feeds upon no earthly hope,
Which never thinks of victory, but content
In its own consummation, *combating*
Because it ought to combat, ...
Rejoicing fights, and still rejoicing falls."
The Combat of Life.—R. M. Milnes.

flow in ineffective singleness away. He will not be careful that his name should be inscribed upon the mite which he casts into the treasury of God. It should suffice each of us to know that, *if* we have laboured, with purity of purpose, in any good cause, we *must* have contributed to its success; that the degree in which we have contributed is a matter of infinitely small concern; and still more, that the consciousness of having so contributed, however obscurely and unnoticed, should be our sufficient, if our sole, reward. Let us cherish this faith; it is a duty. He who sows and reaps is a good labourer, and worthy of his hire. But he who sows what shall be reaped by others who know not and reck not of the sower, is a labourer of a nobler order, and worthy of a loftier guerdon.

V. The common Christian conception of the pardon of sin upon repentance and conversion seems to us to embody a very transparent and pernicious fallacy. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" asked the Pharisees. There is great confusion and contradiction in our ideas on this subject. God is the only being who can *not* forgive sins. "Forgiveness of sins" means one of two things:—it either means saving a man from the consequences of his sins, that is, interposing between cause and effect, in which case it is *working a miracle* (which God no doubt can do, but which we have no right to expect that He will do, or ask that He shall do); or it means *an engagement to forbear retaliation*, a suppression of the natural anger felt against the offender by the offended party, *a foregoing of vengeance* on the part of the injured—in which meaning it is obviously quite inapplicable to a Being exempt and aloof from human passions. When we entreat a fellow-creature to forgive the offences we have committed against him, we mean to entreat that he will not, by any act of his, punish us for them, that he will not revenge nor repay them, that he will retain no rancour in his breast against us on account of them; and such a prayer addressed to a being of like passions to ourselves is rational and intelligible, because we know that it is natural for him to feel anger at our injuries, and that, unless moved to the contrary, he will probably retaliate. But when we pray to our Heavenly Father to "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," we overlook the want of parallelism of the two cases, and show

that our notions on the subject are altogether misty and confused; for God cannot be *injured* by our sins, and He is inaccessible to the passions of anger and revenge. Yet the plain expression of the Book of Common Prayer—"Neither take Thou vengeance of our sins"—embodies the real signification attached to the prayer for forgiveness, by all who attach any definite signification to their prayers. Now, this expression is an *Old Testament* or a *Pagan* expression, and can only be consistently and intelligibly used by those who entertain the same low ideas of God as the ancient Greeks and Hebrews entertained—that is, who think of Him as an irritable, jealous, and avenging Potentate.

If, from this inconsistency, we take refuge in the other meaning of the Prayer for forgiveness, and assume that it is a prayer to God that He will exempt us from the natural and appointed consequences of our misdeeds, it is important that we should clearly define to our minds what it is that we are asking for. In our view of the matter, punishment for sins by the divine law is a wholly different thing and process from punishment for violations of human laws. It is not an infliction for crime, imposed by an external authority and artificially executed by external force, but a natural and inevitable result of the offence—a child generated by a parent—a sequence following an antecedent—a consequence arising out of a cause.

> "The Lord is just: He made the chain
> Which binds together guilt and pain."

The punishment of sin *consists* in the consequences of sin. These form a penalty most adequately heavy. A sin without its punishment is as impossible, as complete a contradiction in terms, as a cause without an effect.

To pray that God will forgive our sins, therefore, appears, in all logical accuracy, to involve either a most unworthy conception of His character, or an entreaty of incredible audacity—viz. that He will work daily miracles in our behalf. It is either beseeching Him to renounce feelings and intentions which it is impossible that a Nature like His should entertain: or it is asking Him to violate the eternal and harmonious order of the universe, for the comfort of one out of the infinite myriads of its inhabitants.

It may, perhaps, be objected, that Punishment of sins may

be viewed, not as a vengeance taken for injury or insult committed, nor yet as the simple and necessary sequence of a cause—but as *chastisement*, inflicted to work repentance and amendment. But, even when considered in this light, prayer for forgiveness remains still a marvellous inconsistency. It then becomes the entreaty of the sick man to his Physician not to heal him. "Forgive us our sins," then means, "Let us continue in our iniquity." It is clear, however, that the first meaning we have mentioned, as attached to the prayer for forgiveness of sins, is both the original and the prevailing one; and that it arises from an entire misconception of the character of the Deity, and of the feelings with which He may be supposed to regard sin—a misconception inherited from our Pagan and Jewish predecessors: it is a prayer to deprecate the just resentment of a Potentate whom we have offended—a petition which would be more suitably addressed to an earthly enemy than to a Heavenly Father. The misconception is natural to a rude state of civilization and of theology. It is the same notion from which arose sacrifices (*i. e.* offerings to appease wrath), and which caused their universality in early ages and among barbarous nations. It is a relic of anthropomorphism;—a belief that God, like man, is *enraged* by neglect or disobedience, and can be *pacified* by submission and entreaty;—a belief consistent and intelligible among the Greeks—inconsistent and irrational among Christians—correct as applied to Jupiter—unmeaning or blasphemous as applied to Jehovah.

We have, in fact, come to regard sin, not as an injury done to our own nature—an offence against our own souls—a disfiguring of the image of the Beautiful and Good—but as a personal affront offered to a powerful and avenging Being, which, unless *apologized* for, will be chastised as such. We have come to regard it as an injury to *another* party, for which atonement and reparation can be made and satisfaction can be given;—not as a deed which cannot be undone—eternal in its consequences; an act which, once committed, is numbered with the irrevocable Past. In a word, Sin *contains* its own retributive penalty as surely, and as naturally, as the acorn contains the oak. Its consequence is its punishment—it needs no other, and can have no heavier; and its consequence is involved in its commission, and cannot be separated from it. *Punishment* (let us fix this in our minds) *is*

not the execution of a sentence, but the occurrence of an effect. It is ordained to follow guilt by God—not as a Judge, but as the Creator and Legislator of the Universe. This conviction, once settled in our understandings, will wonderfully clear up our views on the subject of pardon and redemption. Redemption becomes then, of necessity, not a saving but a regenerating process. We can be redeemed from the punishment of sin only by being redeemed from its commission. Neither *can* there be any such thing as vicarious atonement or punishment (which, again, is a relic of heathen conceptions of an angered Deity, to be propitiated by offerings and sacrifices). Punishment, being not the penalty, but the result of sin,—being not an arbitrary and artificial annexation, but an ordinary and logical consequence—cannot be borne by other than the sinner.

It is curious that the votaries of the doctrine of the Atonement admit the correctness of much of the above reasoning, saying (see "Guesses at Truth," by J. and A. Hare), that Christ had to suffer for the sins of men, because God *could not* forgive sin; He must punish it in some way. Thus holding the strangely inconsistent doctrine that God is so just that He could not let sin go unpunished, yet so unjust that He could punish it in the person of the innocent. It is for orthodox dialectics to explain how Divine Justice can be *impugned* by pardoning the guilty, and yet *vindicated* by punishing the innocent!

If the foregoing reflections are sound, the awful, yet wholesome, conviction presses upon our minds, that *there can be no forgiveness of sins;*—that is, no interference with, or remittance of, or protection from, their natural effects;—that God will not interpose between the cause and its consequence[1];—that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." An awful consideration this;—yet all reflection, all experience, confirm its truth. The sin which has debased our soul may be repented of, may be turned from,—but the injury is done:—the debasement may be redeemed by after efforts, the stain may be obliterated by bitterer struggles and

[1] Refer to Matt. ix. 2–6.. "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee! or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk?" Jesus seems here clearly to intimate that the view taken above (of forgiveness of sins, namely, involving an interference with the natural order of sequence, and being therefore a *miracle*) is correct. He places the two side by side, as equally difficult.

severer sufferings, by faith in God's love and communion with His Spirit; but the efforts and the endurance which might have raised the soul to the loftiest heights, are now exhausted in merely regaining what it has lost. "There must always be a wide difference (as one of our divines has said) between him who only ceases to do evil, and him who has always done well;—between the man who began to serve his God as soon as he knew that he had a God to serve, and the man who only turns to Heaven after he has exhausted all the indulgences of Earth."

Again, in the case of sin of which you have induced another to partake. You may repent—*you* may, after agonizing struggles, regain the path of virtue—*your* spirit may re-achieve its purity through much anguish, and after many stripes;—but the weaker fellow-creature whom you led astray—whom you made a sharer in your guilt, but whom you cannot make a sharer in your repentance and amendment—whose downward course (the first step of which you taught) you cannot check, but are compelled to witness—what "forgiveness" of sins can avail you there? *There* is your perpetual, your inevitable, punishment, which no repentance can alleviate, and no mercy can remit.

This doctrine—that sins can be forgiven, and the consequences of them averted—has in all ages been a fertile source of mischief. Perhaps few of our intellectual errors have fructified in a vaster harvest of evil, or operated more powerfully to impede the moral progress of our race. While it has been a source of unspeakable comfort to the penitent, a healing balm to the wounded spirit—while it has saved many from hopelessness, and enabled those to recover themselves who would otherwise have flung away the remnant of their virtue in despair; yet, on the other hand, it has encouraged millions—*feeling what a safety was in store for them in ultimate resort*—to persevere in their career of folly or crime—to ignore or despise those natural laws which God has laid down to be the guides and beacons of our conduct—to continue to do "that which was pleasant in their own eyes"—convinced that nothing was irrevocable, that—however dearly they might have to pay for re-integration—repentance could at any time redeem their punishment, and *undo the past*. The doctrine has been noxious in exact ratio to the baldness and nakedness with which it has been pro-

pounded. In the Catholic Church of the middle ages we see it perhaps in its grossest form, when pardon was sold, bargained for, rated at a fixed price—when one hoary sinner, on the bed of sickness, refused to repent, because he was not *certain* that death was close at hand, and he did not wish for the trouble of going through the process twice, and was loth by a premature amendment, to lose a chance of any of the indulgences of sin. Men would have been far more scrupulous watchers over conduct—far more careful of their deeds—had they believed that those deeds would inevitably bear their natural consequences, exempt from after intervention—than when they held that penitence and pardon could at any time unlink the clain of sequences;—just as now they are little scrupulous of indulging in hurtful excess, when medical aid is at hand to remedy the mischief they have voluntarily encountered:—But were they on a desert island, apart from the remotest hope of a doctor or a drug, how far more closely would they consider the consequences of each indulgence—how earnestly would they study the laws of Nature—how comparatively unswerving would be their endeavours to steer their course by those laws, obedience to which brings health, peace, and safety in its train!

Let any one look back upon his past career—look inward on his daily life—and then say what effect would be produced upon him, were the conviction once fixedly imbedded in his soul, that everything done is done irrevocably—that even the Omnipotence of God cannot *uncommit* a deed—cannot make that undone which has been done;—that every act of his *must* bear its allotted fruit according to the everlasting laws—must remain for ever ineffaceably inscribed on the tablets of universal Nature. And then let him consider what would have been the result upon the moral condition of our race, had all men ever held this conviction.

Perhaps you have led a youth of dissipation and excess which has undermined and enfeebled your constitution, and you have transmitted this injured and enfeebled constitution to your children. They suffer, in consequence, through life; suffering is *entailed* upon them; your repentance, were it in sackcloth and ashes, cannot help you or them. Your punishment is tremendous, but it is legitimate and inevitable. You have broken Nature's laws, or you have ignored them; and no one violates or neglects them with im-

effect into any great or dangerous achievement, unless he is prepared to subdue and set at nought all interfering interests and feelings.

That the Apostles, called to fight against principalities and powers—obliged to hold life and all its affections cheap, because the course of action in which they were engaged perilled these at every step—finding the great obstacle to their success in the tenacity with which their hearers clung to those old associations, occupations, and enjoyments, which embracing the new faith would oblige them to forswear—impressed, moreover, with the solemn and tremendous conviction that the world was falling to pieces, and that their own days and their own vision would witness the final catastrophe of nature—that the Apostles should regard with unloving eyes that world of which their hold was so precarious and their tenure so short, and should look with amazement and indignation upon men who would cling to a doomed and perishing habitation, instead of gladly sacrificing everything to obtain a footing in the new Kingdom—was natural and, granting the premises, rational and wise.

But for Divines in this day—when the profession of Christianity is attended with no peril, when its practice, even, demands no sacrifice, save that preference of duty to enjoyment which is the first law of cultivated humanity—to repeat the language, profess the feelings, inculcate the notions, of men who lived in daily dread of such awful martyrdom, and under the excitement of such a mighty misconception; to cry down this world, with its profound beauty, its thrilling interests, its glorious works, its noble and holy affections; to exhort their hearers, Sunday after Sunday, to detach their hearts from the earthly life as inane, fleeting, and unworthy, and fix it upon Heaven, as the only sphere deserving the love of the loving or the meditation of the wise,—appears to us, we confess, frightful insincerity, the enactment of a wicked and gigantic lie. The exhortation is delivered and listened to as a thing of course; and an hour afterwards the preacher, who has thus usurped and profaned the language of an Apostle who wrote with the faggot and the cross full in view, is sitting comfortably with his hearer over his claret; they are fondling their children, discussing public affairs or private plans in life with pas-

sionate interest, and yet can look at each other without a smile or a blush for the sad and meaningless farce they have been acting!

Yet the closing of our connection with this earthly scene is as certain and probably as near to us as it was to the Apostles. Death is as close to us as the end of the world was to them. It is not, therefore, their misconception on this point which makes their view of life unsound and insincere when adopted by us. We believe it to be erroneous in itself, and to proceed upon false conceptions of our relation to time and to futurity. The doctrine, as ordinarily set forth, that this world is merely one of probation and preparation, we entirely disbelieve. The idea of regarding it as merely a portal to another is simply an attempt to solve the enigma of life; a theory to explain the sufferings of man, and to facilitate the endurance of them; to supply the support and consolation which man's weakness cannot dispense with, but which he has not yet learned to draw from deeper and serener fountains. On the contrary, we think that everything tends to prove that this life is, not perhaps, not probably, our only sphere, but still an *integral* one, and *the* one with which we are meant to be concerned. The present is our scene of action—the future is for speculation, and for trust. We firmly believe that man was sent upon the earth to live in it, to enjoy it, to study it, to love it, to embellish it—to make the most of it, in short. It is his country, on which he should lavish his affections and his efforts. *Spartam nactus es—hanc exorna.* It should be to him a house, not a tent—a home, not only a school. If, when this house and this home are taken from him, Providence in its wisdom and its bounty provides him with another, let him be deeply grateful for the gift—let him transfer to that future, *when it has become his present*, his exertions, his researches, and his love. But let him rest assured that he is sent into this world, not to be constantly hankering after, dreaming of, preparing for, another which may, or may not, be in store for him—but to do his duty and fulfil his destiny on earth—to do all that lies in his power to improve it, to render it a scene of elevated happiness to himself, to those around him, to those who are to come after him. So will he avoid those tormenting contests with Nature—those

struggles to suppress affections which God has implanted, sanctioned, and endowed with irresistible supremacy—those agonies of remorse when he finds that God is too strong for him—which now embitter the lives of so many earnest and sincere souls: so will he best prepare for that future which we hope for—if it come;—so will he best have occupied the present, if the present be his all. To demand that we shall love Heaven more than Earth—that the Unseen shall hold a higher place in our affections than the Seen and the Familiar—is to ask that which cannot be obtained without subduing Nature, and inducing a morbid condition of the Soul. The very law of our being is love of life and all its interests and adornments.

This love of the world in which our lot is cast, this engrossment with the interests and affections of Earth, has in it nothing necessarily low or sensual. It is wholly apart from love of wealth, of fame, of ease, of splendour, of power, of what is commonly called worldliness. It is the love of Earth as the garden on which the Creator has lavished such miracles of beauty, as the habitation of humanity, the arena of its conflicts, the scene of its illimitable progress, the dwelling-place of the wise, the good, the active, the loving, and the dear.

"It is not the purpose and end of this discourse, to raise such seraphical notions of the vanity and pleasures of this world, as if they were not worthy to be considered, or could have no relish with virtuous and pious men. They take very unprofitable pains who endeavour to persuade men that they are obliged wholly to despise this world and all that is in it, even whilst they themselves live here: God hath not taken all that pains in forming, and framing, and furnishing, and adorning the world, that they who were made by Him to live in it should despise it; it will be enough if they do not love it so immoderately as to prefer it before Him who made it: nor shall we endeavour to extend the notions of the Stoic Philosophers, and stretch them further by the help of Christian precepts, to the extinguishing all those affections and passions which are and will always be inseparable from human nature. As long as the world lasts, and honour, and virtue, and industry have reputation in the world, there will be ambition and emulation and appetite in

the best and most accomplished men in it; if there should not be, more barbarity and vice and wickedness would cover every nation of the world, than it yet suffers under."[1]

It is difficult to decide whether exhortations to ascetic undervaluing of this life, as an insignificant and unworthy portion of existence, have done most injury to our virtue, by demanding feelings which are unnatural, and which, therefore, if *attained*, must be morbid, if merely *professed*, must be insincere—or to the cause of social progress, by teaching us to look rather to a future life for the compensation of social evils, than to this life for their cure. It is only those who feel a deep interest in and affection for this world, who will work resolutely for its amelioration;—those whose affections are transferred to Heaven acquiesce easily in the miseries of earth; give them up as hopeless, as befitting, as ordained; and console themselves with the idea of the amends which are one day to be theirs[2]. If we had looked upon this earth as our only scene, it is doubtful if we should so long have tolerated its more monstrous anomalies and more curable evils. But it is easier to look to a future paradise than to strive to make one upon earth; and the depreciating and hollow language of preachers has played into the hands both of the insincerity and the indolence of man.

I question whether the whole system of professing Christians is not based in a mistake, whether it be not an error to strive after *spirituality*—after a frame of mind, that is, which is attainable only by incessant conflict with the instincts of our unsophisticated nature, by macerating the body into weakness and disorder; by disparaging what we see to be beautiful, know to be wonderful, feel to be unspeakably dear and fascinating; by (in a word) putting down the nature which God has given us, to struggle after one which He has not bestowed. Man is sent into the world, not a spiritual, but a composite being, a being made

[1] Lord Clarendon's Essay on Happiness.

[2] "I sorrowfully admit, that when I count up among my personal acquaintances all whom I think to be the most decidedly given to spiritual contemplation, and to make religion rule in their hearts, at least three out of four appear to have been apathetic towards all improvement of this world's systems, and a majority have been virtual *conservatives of evil*, and hostile to political and social reform as diverting men's energies from Eternity."—Note by a Friend.

up of body and mind—the body having, as is fit and needful in a material world, its full, rightful, and allotted share. Life should be guided by a full recognition of this fact; not denying it as we do in bold words, and admitting it in weaknesses and inevitable failings. *Man's spirituality will come in the next stage of his being*, when he is endowed with the σωμα πνευματικον. Each in its order: "first, that which is natural; afterwards, that which is spiritual." The body will be dropped at death!—till then God meant it to be commanded, but never to be neglected, despised, or ignored, under pain of heavy consequences.

The two classes of believers in future progress—those who believe in the future perfection of the individual, and those who believe in the future perfection of the race—are moved to different modes of action. Perhaps they ought not to be; but from the defects of our reason, and from personal feelings, they generally are. It is a question, however, whether the world, *i. e.* the human race, will not be more benefited by the labours of those who look upon Heaven as a state to be attained on earth by future generations, than by those who regard it as the state to be attained by themselves after death, in another world. The latter will look only, or mainly, to the improvement of their own character and capacities;—the former will devote their exertions to the amelioration of their kind and their habitation. The latter are too easily induced to give up earth as hopeless and incorrigible;—the former, looking upon it as the scene of blessed existence to others hereafter, toil for its amendment and embellishment. There is a vast fund of hidden selfishness, or what, at least, has often the practical effect of such, in the idea of Heaven as ordinarily conceived; and much of the tolerated misery of earth may be traced to it[1].

Do we then mean that our future prospects have no claim on our attention here? Far from it. The fate of the Soul after it leaves those conditions under which alone we have any cognizance of its existence, the possibility of continued and eternal being, and the character of the scenes in which

[1] See some very interesting reflections on this subject (with which, however, I do not at all agree), by Sir James Mackintosh (Life, 120–122). See also some curious speculations by a Communistic Frenchman, Pierre Leroux, in his work De l'Humanité.

that being will be developed, must always form topics of the profoundest interest, and the most ennobling and refining contemplation. These great matters will of necessity, from their attractions, and ought, from their purifying tendencies, to occupy much of the leisure of all thinking and aspiring minds. Those whose affections are ambitious, whose conceptions are lofty, whose imagination is vivid, eloquent, and daring—those to whom this life has been a scene of incessant failure—those "whom Life hath wearied in its race of hours," who, harassed and toil-worn, sink under the burden of their three-score years—those, who having seen friend, parent, child, wife, successively removed from the homes they beautified and hallowed, find the balance of attraction gradually inclining in favour of another life,—all such will cling to these lofty speculations with a tenacity of interest which needs no injunction, and will listen to no prohibition. All we wish to suggest is that they should be regarded rather as the consoling privilege of the aspiring, the way-worn, the weary, the bereaved, than as the inculcated duty of youth in its vigour, or beauty in its prime.

Yet, having said thus much by way of combating an erroneous view of life which appears to lead to a perilous and demoralizing insincerity, I would not be thought incapable of appreciating the light which the contemplation of the future may let in upon the present, nor the effect which that contemplation is fitted to produce on the development of the higher portions of our nature. One of the most difficult, and at the same time the gravest, of the practical problems of life, is the right adjustment of the respective claims of heaven and earth upon the time and thought of man:—how much should be given to performing the duties and entering into the interests of this world, and how much to preparation for a better;—how much to action, and how much to meditation;—how much to the cultivation and purification of our own character, and how much to the public service of our fellow-men. Nor is this nice problem adequately solved by saying that Heaven is most worthily served, and most surely won, by a scrupulous discharge of the duties of our earthly station; and that constant labour for the good of others will afford the best development for the purer portions

of our own character. There is much truth in this; but there is not complete truth. The man whose whole life is spent in discharging with diligence and fidelity the toils of his allotted position in society, or whose every hour is devoted to the details of philanthropic exertions, is in a rare degree "a good and faithful servant;" yet it is impossible not to perceive that he may pass through life with many depths of his being altogether unsounded, with the richest secrets of the soul undiscovered and unguessed, with many of the loftiest portions of his character still latent and unimproved; and that when he passes through the portals of the grave, and reaches the new Existence, he will enter it a wholly unprepared and astonished stranger. Much quiet meditation, much solitary introspection, which the man involved in the vortex of active and public life has rarely leisure to bestow, seem requisite to gain a clear conception of the true objects and meaning of existence—of the relation which our individual entities hold with the Universe around us and the Great Spirit which pervades it. Without this deep and solitary communing with our inner Nature, the most energetic and untiring Philanthropist or Duty-doer among us appears little more than an instrument in the hands of the Creator—a useful and noble one, certainly, yet still an instrument—for the production of certain results, but not to have attained to the dignity of a distinct and individual Intelligence—an agent who comprehends himself and the nature of the work in which he is engaged, as well as the mere routine of its performance.

Again, notwithstanding all that has been said as to the admirable effect of *action* on the character, it is certain that there are many points of personal morality from which a life of busy and even meritorious activity almost unavoidably diverts our attention. The temper, the appetites, the passions, require a ceaseless and guarded watchfulness, to which incessant exertion is, to say the least, certainly not favourable.

On the other hand, too frequent a reflection—too deep an insight—too vivid a realization of the great mysteries of Being, would be apt so to shrivel up into microscopic insignificance all the cares, toils, and interests of this life, as entirely to paralyze our zeal and energy concerning them.

If we were literally to "live as seeing Him who is invisible," the common works of earth could no longer be performed, save as a duty, and in a dream. It is well for us that we "walk by faith, and not by sight." If we could realize both the nearness and the fulness of Eternity, we should be unfitted for the requirements of this earthly state.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT ENIGMA.

We are accustomed to say that Christ brought life and immortality to light by his Gospel; by which we mean,—not that he first taught the doctrine of a future life, scarcely even that he threw any new light on the nature of that life; for the doctrine was held, long before he lived, by many uncivilized tribes; it was the received opinion of most, if not all, among the Oriental nations; and it was an established tenet of the most popular and powerful sect among the Jews;—but that he gave to the doctrine, for the first time, an authoritative sanction; he announced it as a direct revelation from the Deity; and, as it were, exemplified and embodied it in his own resurrection. But, as we have already come to the conclusion that Christianity was not a Revelation in the ordinary sense of the word, Christ's inculcation of the doctrine becomes simply the added attestation of the wisest and best man who ever lived, to a faith which has been cherished by the wise and good of all times and of all lands.

In consequence of this view of Christianity, a future life becomes to us no longer a matter of positive knowledge—a revealed fact—but simply a matter of faith, of hope, of earnest desire; a sublime possibility, round which meditation and inquiry will collect all the probabilities they can. Christianity adds nothing certain to our convictions or to our knowledge on the subject, however rich it may be in suggestions of the truth. Let us, therefore, by a short statement of its views of futurity, see how far they are such as can be accepted by a cultivated and inquiring age.

It may seem to many a strange observation, but we greatly question whether the views of Christ regarding the future

world (so far as we can gather them from the imperfect and uncertain records of his sayings, which alone we have to go by) were not *less* in advance of those current in his age and country, than his views upon any other topic. The popular opinion—that he made a matter of certainty what before was only a matter of speculation—has blinded our perceptions on this point. When we put aside this common misconception, and come to examine what the notions inculcated by the Gospel concerning the *nature* of this futurity really were, we shall be surprised and pained to find how little they added, and how little they rose superior, to those current among the Pharisees and the Essenes at the date of its promulgation; and perhaps even how far they fell short of those attained by some pious pagans of an earlier date.

The scriptural idea of Heaven, so far as we can collect it from the Gospels, seems to have been:—

1. That it was a scene hallowed and embellished by the more immediate, or at least more perceptible, presence of God, who is constantly spoken of as "*Our Father who is in Heaven.*" It is the local dwelling-place of the Creator, lying exterior to and above the Earth, and into which Christ visibly *ascended*. Indeed, notwithstanding the distinct and repeated assertions of the perpetual superintendence of God, He is depicted much more as a local and limited, and much less as a pervading and spiritual Being, in the New Testament than in many of the Psalms and in Job. The delineations of the former are far more simple, affectionate, and human—far more tinged with anthropomorphism, in the *tone* at least; those of the latter more vague, more sublime, more spiritual. In this point, the Gospel idea of one of the attributes of Heaven, though eminently beautiful, natural, and attractive, will scarcely bear scrutiny. That in a future state we shall be more conscious of God's presence, is not only probable, but is a necessary consequence of the extension and purification of our faculties; that He dwells there more than here is an obviously untenable conception. The notion may be said to be subjectively true, but objectively false.

2. That Heaven would be a scene of retribution for the deeds and characters of earth has been the view of its essential nature taken by nearly all nations which have believed in its existence: to this idea the Gospel has added

nothing new. That it would also be a state of *compensation*, to rectify the inequalities and atone for the sufferings of our sublunary life, has long been the consolatory notion of the disappointed and the sorrow-stricken. This idea Christianity especially encourages; nay, unless we are to allow an unusually free deduction for the hyperbolical language which the New Testament habitually employs, it would appear to carry it to an extent scarcely reconcilable with sober reason or pure justice; almost countenancing the notion—so seducing to the less worthy feelings of the discontented and the wretched—not only that *their* troubles will be compensated by a proportionate excess of future joy, but that earthly prosperity will, *per se*, and apart from any notion of moral retribution, constitute a title to proportionate suffering hereafter—that, in truth, Heaven will be the especial and exclusive patrimony of the poor and the afflicted. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. But woe unto ye that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto ye that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto ye that laugh now, for ye shall weep." The parable of Dives and Lazarus inculcates the same notion. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." It is very difficult to discover on what worthy conception of Divine Providence the ideas inculcated in these last quotations can be justified, or how they can be reconciled with the doctrine of a just moral retribution; and it is equally difficult to shut our eyes to the encouragement they may give and have given to the envious and malignant feelings of grovelling and uncultured minds[1].

3. The eternal duration of the future existence has, we believe, with all nations formed a constituent element of the doctrine; though it is so far from being a necessary one, that it is not easy to discover whence its universal adoption

[1] See Eugene Aram, chap. viii., for an illustration. A Calvinist peasant considered that the choicest bliss of Heaven would be "to look down into the other place, and see the folk grill." Tertullian has a passage, part of which Gibbon quotes (c. xv.), expressing the same idea in language quite as horrible. We believe there is a similar passage in Baxter's Saints' Rest.

is to be traced. To this idea Scripture has added another, which presents a stumbling-block to our moral and our metaphysical philosophy alike—viz. the *unchanging* character of both its pains and pleasures. We attempt in vain to trace in the Gospel the least evidence that the future state is to be regarded as one of *progress*—that its sufferings are to be probationary and purifying, and therefore terminable; or its joys elevating and improving, and therefore ever advancing. If any doctrine be distinctly taught by Scripture on this point, it clearly is, that the lot of each individual is fixed for ever at the judgment day. In this it stands below both Pagan and Oriental conceptions. The Gospel view of the eternity of the future life, which fully approves itself to our reason, is one which it shares with all theories: its conception of the eternity of future punishments, in which it stands almost alone, is one, the revolting character of which has been so strongly felt, that the utmost ingenuity both of criticism and of logic, has been strained for centuries—the first, to prove that the doctrine is not taught, the second, to prove that it ought to be received. Neither have succeeded. It seems to us unquestionable that the doctrine is taught in the clear language of Scripture, and was held unhesitatingly by the Apostles and the first Christians; and all the attempts yet made to reconcile the doctrine with divine justice and mercy are calculated to make us blush alike for the human heart that can strive to justify such a creed, and for the human intellect which can delude itself into a belief that it has succeeded in such justification.

That would be a great book, and he would be a great man, that should detect and eliminate the latent and disfigured truth that lies at the root of every falsehood ever yet believed among men. In Scripture we meet with several doctrines which may be considered as the *approximate formula*, the imperfect, partial, and inaccurate expression, of certain mighty and eternal verities. Thus, the spirituality of Christ's character and the superhuman excellence of his life, lie at the bottom of the dogma of the Incarnation; which was simply "a mistake of the morally for the physically divine," an idea carnalized into a fact. In the same manner, the doctrine of the eternity of future punishments, false as it must be in its ordinary signification, contains a glimpse of one of the most awful and indisputable truths

ever presented to the human understanding—viz. the eternal and ineffaceable consequences of our every action, the fact that every word and every deed produces effects which must, by the very nature of things, reverberate through all time, so that the whole of futurity would be different had that word never been spoken, or that deed enacted.

"The pulsations of the air, once set in motion by the human voice, cease not to exist with the sounds to which they gave rise. Strong and audible as they may be in the immediate neighbourhood of the speaker, and at the immediate moment of utterance, their quickly-attenuated force soon becomes inaudible to human ears. But the waves of air thus raised perambulate the earth's and ocean's surface, and in less than twenty hours every atom of its atmosphere takes up the altered movement due to that infinitesimal portion of primitive motion which has been conveyed to it through countless channels, and which must continue to influence its path throughout its future existence.

"But these aerial pulses, unseen by the keenest eye, unheard by the acutest ear, unperceived by human senses, are yet demonstrated to exist by human reason; and in some few and limited instances, by calling to our aid the most refined and comprehensive instrument of human thought (mathematical analysis), their courses are traced, and their intensities measured. . . . . Thus considered, what a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined in ten thousand ways with all that is worthless and base. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages is for ever written all that man has ever said or even whispered. There, in their mutable, but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest as well as the latest sighs of mortality, stand for ever recorded vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating, in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will.

"But if the air we breathe is the never-failing historian of the sentiments we have uttered, earth, air, and ocean, are in like manner the eternal witnesses of the acts we have done . . . . . No motion impressed by natural causes or by human agency is ever obliterated. The track of every canoe which has yet disturbed the surface of the ocean, re-

mains for ever registered in the future moments of all succeeding particles which may occupy its place.

"Whilst the atmosphere we breathe is the ever-living witness of the sentiments we have uttered, the waters and the more solid materials of the globe, bear equally enduring testimony of the acts we have committed. If the Almighty stamped on the brow of the earliest murderer the visible and indelible mark of his guilt, he has also established laws by which every succeeding criminal is not less irrevocably chained to the testimony of his crime; for every atom of his mortal frame, through whatever changes its severest particles may migrate, will still retain, adhering to it through every combination, some movement derived from that very muscular effort by which the crime itself was perpetrated."[1]

"If we imagine the soul in an after stage of existence, connected with an organ of hearing so sensitive as to vibrate with motions of the air, even of infinitesimal force, and if it be still within the precincts of its ancient abode, all the accumulated words pronounced from the creation of mankind will fall at once on that ear; . . . . . and the punished offender may hear still vibrating on his ear the very words uttered perhaps thousands of centuries before, which at once caused and registered his own condemnation."[2]

There is therefore a sense in which the eternity of future punishment may be irrefragably and terribly true—if that very enhancement of our faculties in a future life which enables us to perceive and trace the ineffaceable consequences of our idle words and our evil deeds, should render our remorse and grief as eternal as those consequences themselves. No more fearful punishment to a superior Intelligence can be conceived than to see still in action—with the consciousness that it must continue in action for ever—a cause of wrong put in motion by itself ages before. Let us trust either that our capacities will be too limited for this awful retribution, or that the resources of omnipotence may be adequate to cancel or to veil the Past.

4. It is remarkable that while in the New Testament the delights of Heaven are always depicted as consisting in the exercise and development of the spiritual affections, the

[1] Babbage. Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, c. ix.
[2] Ibid. c. xii.

pains of Hell are as constantly delineated as *physical*. The joys of the one state are those of the intellect and the Soul; the sufferings of the other those of the body only. In the Gospel pictures, Heaven is "to sit at the right hand of the Father,"—Hell is "to burn in unquenchable fire." Unless there be some deep meaning hidden under this apparent inconsistency; unless it be intended to intimate to us that the blessed will be made purely spiritual, and that the damned will be wholly absorbed in their corporeality—an idea which it is difficult to admit;—it seems strange that the description of Heaven as consisting in communion with God and with the Just made perfect, should not have suggested the correlative idea, that Hell must consist in "living with the Devil and his angels;" in fact, what more horrible conception of it could be formed?

5. But perhaps the most imperfect and inadmissible point in the Scriptural conception of the Future World, is that which represents it as divided into two distinct states, separated by an impassable barrier, *decidedly* on one or other side of which the eternal destiny of every one is cast. Such an arrangement, it is obvious, is incompatible with any but the rudest idea of righteous retribution, and could only be the resource of imperfect justice and imperfect power. For as in this world there is every possible gradation of virtue and of vice, which run into each other by the most imperceptible degrees, and are often only distinguishable by the minutest shade—so in the next world there must be every possible gradation of reward and punishment. A trenchant line of demarcation, which from its nature must be arbitrary, and which every one who overpasses by a hair's-breadth must overpass by a great gulph, could only be the invention of a judge of finite and imperfect capacity, for the more convenient dispatch of judgment. That,—of two individuals whose degree of virtue is so similar that the question of precedence can neither be decided by the keenest human insight, nor expressed by the finest minutiæ of human language,—one should be rewarded with eternal joy, and the other condemned to everlasting torment—is assuredly among the rudest of religious conceptions. Yet to all appearance, such is the notion of future retribution held by the New Testament writers.

The doctrine of a future life has been firmly held in all

ages, and by every order of minds. The reasonings ordinarily adduced in proof of this doctrine have always appeared to me deplorably weak and inconclusive; so much, so as clearly to indicate that they do not form the grounds on which it has been believed, but are merely subsequent attempts to justify that belief. *The creed being there*, human reason, in the endeavour to account for it, has surrounded it with props and crutches of every conceivable degree of weakness; and these post-dated supports have been mistaken for the foundation. But they are not so: and we must at once distinguish between the conviction and the arguments by which the mind (*erroneously supposing it to be based on argument, and to need argument for its justification*) has sought to build it up. Logic never originated it: logic can never establish it. All that can properly be called reasoning, *i. e.* inference deduced from observation, appears to point the other way. It is remarkable, too, that while the doctrine is announced with the utmost clearness and positiveness in the New Testament, all the attempts there made to bring arguments in its favour, to prove it logically, or even to establish a reasonable probability for it —are futile in the extreme[1]. Nature throws no light upon the subject; the phenomena we observe could never have suggested the idea of a renewed existence beyond the grave; physiological science distinctly negatives it. Appearances all testify to the reality and permanence of death; a fearful

[1] The reasoning ascribed to Jesus (Luke xx. 37)—"Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living"—it is scarcely possible to regard as anything but a verbal ingenuity.—Paul's logic (Romans viii. 16, 17; and 1 Thess. iv. 14) is, to say the least of it, feeble and far-fetched. While the well-known passage in 1 Cor. xv. 12–16, is one of the most marvellous specimens extant of reasoning in a circle. On this see Newman on the Soul, p. 185; Bush's Anastasis, p. 170.

In one point of the view of a future existence there would appear to be a remarkable coincidence between the notions of the Pagan philosophers and those of the more enlightened among the Jews and some of the early Christians. The Ancients seem to have imagined that only *the Great* would live again; that the mass of souls, the *οἱ πολλοί*, were not worth resuscitating. Thus Tacitus (Vit. Agr.), "Si quis *piorum* manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguuntur *magnæ animæ*," &c. Cicero de Senect.—"O preclaram diem, cum ad illud *divinum animorum* concilium cœtumque proficiscar," &c. See the above passages in the Epistles. Also Anastasis, 169, 252; in Luke xx. 35; remarkable expression, "They which shall be accounted worthy," &c.

onus of proof lies upon those who contend that these appearances are deceptive. When we interrogate the vast universe of organization, we see, not simply life and death, but gradually-growing life, and gradually-approaching death. After death, all that we have ever *known* of a man is gone—all we have ever *seen* of him is dissolved into its component elements; it does not *disappear*, so as to leave us at liberty to imagine that it may have gone to exist elsewhere, but is actually used up as materials for other purposes. So completely is this the case that, as Sir James Mackintosh observes, "the doctrine of a resurrection could scarcely have arisen among a people who buried their dead." Moreover, the growth, decay, and dissolution we observe, are, to all appearance, those of the mind as well as the body. We see the mind, the affections, the Soul (if you will), gradually arising, *forming* (for no other expression adequately describes the phenomenon), as the body waxes, sympathizing in all the permanent changes and temporary variations of the body, diseased with its diseases, infeebled by its weakness, disordered by dyspepsia, utterly metamorphosed past recognition by cerebral affection, hopelessly deranged by a spicula of bone penetrating the brain, actually suppressed by a vascular effusion or a cranial depression, wearied as the body ages, and gradually sinking into imbecility as the body dies away in helplessness. The sudden destruction of the corporeal frame by an accident, at a moment when the mind was in its fullest vigour, might possibly suggest the idea of a transference to other scenes of so manifest an Entity, so undeniable a Power—the slow and synchronous extinction of the bodily and mental faculties never could. Look, again, at an infant three years old—two years old—one year old: we say it has a Soul. But take a new-born babe, an hour or a minute old: has *it* a soul, an immortal part or inmate? If so, when does it come to it? at the time of its separation from the Mother's life? or a moment before, or a moment after? Does the awful decision whether it is to be a mere perishable animal, or a spiritual being, depend upon whether it dies an instant before, or an instant after, it first sees the light? Can the question of its immortality —of its being an embryo angel, or a senseless clod—hang upon such an accident as a maternal movement, or a clumsy accoucheur? Inquiries these, our answers to which can

only display either hopeless acquiescence in a gloomy conclusion, or equally hopeless struggles to escape from it.

"Admitting all this," urges one reasoner, "the phenomena of life and death, nay even the doctrine of materialism in all its nakedness, need present no insuperable difficulty; for the same power which bestowed life is surely competent to restore it under another form and in another scene." Unquestionably; but if we are material merely—if our inferences from observation are correct—a renewed existence must be a new creation; where then is our identity? We are not *continued*, but *succeeded*[1].

"But," says another speculator, "how can you tell that there is not some unascertained portion of the human frame, infinitesimal, indeed, and evanescent to our senses, which does not perish with the rest of the corporeal fabric, but forms the germ which is expanded into the new existence."[2] It may be that there is such; but no shadow of a probability can be adduced for such an assumption. It is at best only a mode of *conceiving the possibility* of that which, on other grounds, or without grounds, we have decided to believe. It offers no escape from the overwhelming weight of inference drawn from natural appearances.

The philosophical value of the arguments ordinarily adduced to demonstrate the reality, or at least the high probability, of an existence after death, will be variously estimated by different minds. That they possess, accurately speaking, no logical cogency, will be admitted by all candid and competent reasoners; to us, we confess, they appear lamentably feeble and inadequate.

By some we are told that the soul is immaterial, and that by reason of its immateriality it *cannot* die. How can

[1] Life of Sir James Mackintosh, ii. 120, 121.

[2] The ancient Jews held the existence of such a nucleus. "They contended that there was an immortal bone in the human body (called by them *ossiculum Luz*) which is the germ of the resurrection-body. This bone, they held, one might burn, boil, bake, pound, bruise, or attempt to bruise, by putting it on the anvil and submitting it to the strokes of the sledge-hammer; but all in vain. No effect would be produced upon it. It was indestructible—incorruptible—immortal."—Bush's Anastasis, p. 177. The author of the "Physical Theory" seems to imagine that the body contains some imperishable nucleus, or particle, or element, in which soul or life resides; something as imponderable as light, as imperceptible as electricity, which does not perish with the coarser elements of our frame, but assumes a higher life, and collects about it, or evolves, a nobler and subtler organization.

human beings, professing to have cultivated their understandings, be content to repeat, and rest in, such wretched inanities as these?—at best but the convulsive flounderings of an intellect out of its depth, deluding itself into the belief that it has grasped an idea, when it has only got hold of a word. That the immaterial must of necessity be immortal seems to us an unmeaning assertion on a matter of which we know absolutely nothing. Of the nature of the Soul, science has taught us, indeed, little—far too little to allow us to decide and dogmatize; but honesty must admit that the little it has taught us all points to an opposite conclusion. Alas! for the Spirit's immortal trust, if it rested on such scholastic trivialities as these!

Again. Much stress is laid on the inference to be drawn from the general belief of mankind. But this consideration will lose nearly all its force when we reflect how easily, in the fond, tender, self-deceptive weakness of humanity, a belief can grow out of a wish. Regarded from this point of view, the universal belief in a future state is only the natural result of universal love of life. Man, for his preservation, is endowed with an instinctive love of life, an instinctive horror of destruction—an instinct which is strengthened every hour by the manifold joys and interests of existence. The prolongation of this existence becomes a natural desire, which soon ripens into a passion; in earlier times the possibility of a deathless existence *upon earth* was, we know, the dream, the hope, the pursuit of many; but as accumulated experience speedily dissipated this form of the longings of nature, and compelled men to transfer their aspirations to the other side of the grave, the notion of an invisible futurity arose. The first natural desire was for an earthly immortality; out of the reluctantly acknowledged impossibility of realizing this may have sprung the glorious conception of a heavenly existence. If this view of the genesis of the Universal Creed be correct, the argument drawn from it falls to the ground; since the fact of our desire for any blessing, even when that desire has grown into a conviction, can offer no proof that it will be bestowed.

It is true that now, thousands who have no wish for a prolonged existence upon earth, yet long for and believe in a future life elsewhere. But this is the result partly of a

conviction that the weariness and decay of both physical and moral powers would make continued life here a penalty and not a blessing, and partly of a desire for those higher capacities and nobler pursuits which they anticipate hereafter. The origin of the aspiration still remains the same: it is the desire for a happy existence *after their conceptions of happiness;* and they transfer the scene of it to heaven, because they do not see how these conceptions could be realized on earth, *i. e.*, under the ordinary conditions of humanity.

It will be urged that the belief is strongest in the most spiritual and religious minds, that is, in those which dwell most constantly on unseen and superhuman realities. This is true: and we cannot venture to say that to such minds, raised and purified by heavenly contemplations, may not be given a deeper insight into divine truths than can be attained by those occupied with the things of earth and time. Still the fact will admit of another and more simple explanation; since it is a well-known law of our intellectual constitution that topics and scenes on which the mind habitually and intently dwells, acquire, *ipso facto*, an increasing degree of reality and permanence in our mental vision, out of all proportion to their certainty or actuality. There is no fancy, however baseless—no picture, however shadowy and unreal—to which constant and exclusive contemplation will not impart a consistence, substance, and tenacity, sufficient to render it unassailable by reason, by experience, and almost by the information of the senses. And it cannot be doubted that, however inadequate were the original grounds for the belief in a future state, yet when once it was assumed as an article of faith, daily meditation would soon inevitably confer upon it a firmness and solidity with which the most demonstrable truths of exact science would compete in vain.

Much, and as it appears to us undeserved, stress is laid on the argument derived from the unequal, and apparently unjust, apportionment of human lots.

A future life, it is said, is needed to redress the inequalities of this. But it is evident that this argument proceeds upon two assumptions, one of which is clearly untenable, and the other at least questionable. It assumes that the Presiding Deity is *bound* to allot an equal portion

of good to all his creatures; that to permit the condition of one human being to be happier than that of another, is to perpetrate an injustice,—a position for which it is difficult to imagine any rational defence, and which must probably be assigned to the unconscious operation of one of the least worthy passions of our nature—envy. What possible law can that be which shall make it *the duty* of Him who confers his unpurchased gifts "with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty" to mete out to every being an equal proportion of his boons? The very statement of the proposition confutes it. All that the creature can demand from the justice and the love of his Creator, is that he shall not be created for wretchedness—that on the average of his career, happiness shall predominate over misery—that existence shall, on the whole, have been a blessing—or, what perhaps is the same thing, that it shall be fairly attributable to the voluntary fault—the option—of the individual, if it be not so. Now, without going so far as to assert that there are not, and never have been, exceptions to the general fact that life presents to all a preponderating average of enjoyment, we may well question whether there are such; we are sure they must be incalculably few; and it is to these exceptional cases only that the argument can have any application.

But are human lots as unequal in the amount of happiness they confer as at first sight would appear? It is generally acknowledged that they are not. Without wishing to maintain even an apparent paradox; without arguing that the aggregate balance of enjoyment may not at the end of life be widely different with the cultivated and the brutish—the intellectual and the sensual—the obtuse and the sensitive—the man who has never known a day's sickness, and the man who has never known a day's health—the savage who lives beset with perils and privations, and the noble who lives embosomed in peace and luxury—the wretched pauper, and the wealthy millionaire—the man on whom fortune always smiles, and the man on whom she always frowns—the man whose children are a glory and a blessing, and him to whom they are a plague and a reproach—the man who is hated, and the man who is loved—the man whose life is a ceaseless struggle, and the man whose life is an unbroken sleep;—it is not to be denied that every fresh

insight we obtain into the secrets of each man's lot, equalizes them more and more; discovers undreamed-of compensations for good and for evil; discloses a vigorous spirit of enjoyment among the most obviously unfortunate, and a dark cloud of care brooding over the prosperous, which go far to rectify our first hasty judgment of the inequality of their condition. The inner life of every man is hidden from his fellows by a thick veil: whenever accident draws this partially aside, are we not invariably amazed at the unexpected incongruities it lays bare? Are we not on such occasions made aware that we are habitually forming the most egregiously mistaken estimates of the essential condition of those around us? For myself I can truly say that whenever circumstance has made me intimately acquainted with the deeper secrets of my fellow-men, I have been utterly confounded at the unlooked-for nature of the revelations. Among the lowest I have found "seeds of almost impossible good;" among the most virtuous in appearance (and in some respects in reality), guilt or frailty that scarcely any evidence could make credible; among the most wretched in outward condition, either strange insensibility to suffering, or an inextinguishable spirit of delight; among the most favoured of the children of fortune, some inchoate, or acted, tragedy hanging like a black thunder-cloud over their path.

Compensation is the great law everywhere inscribed on the procedures of Nature. It prevails likewise over human destinies even in this life, not perhaps—not probably—altogether to the extent of equalization, but to an extent that certainly approaches nearer and nearer to this point, the wider our knowledge and the deeper our meditation[1]. Still, I do not wish to push this argument too far: I merely wish

[1] The class whose destiny is by far the most perplexing to the thinker, is that whose element, whose atmosphere, whose almost necessary condition, we may say, is that of vice; the *classes dangereuses* of large towns, who are born and bred in squalor and iniquity, and never have a chance afforded them to rise out of it. Their intellect and moral sense are seldom sufficiently developed to afford them the compensation these bring to others. The apparently hopeless, objectless, noxious existence of these beings, and their fearful power of mischief and of multiplication, have always been, and still remain to me, "God's most disturbing mystery." Still we do not know that, on the whole, even they are miserable. If, however, they are, *it would rather drive us to the startling conclusion that those have most claim on a future life who are least fit for it*—that the least intellectual, the least moral, the least spiritual of the species, are the surest denizens of Heaven!

to show how invalid a foundation it must be for such a superstructure as we build upon it.

"But the ideal of moral retribution (we are told) necessitates a future state. God is a righteous Judge, who will recompense virtue and punish sin. In this life virtue, we know, often goes without its reward, and vice without its punishment:—there must therefore be a future life in which these respectively await them." Such is the syllogism on which reason most relies for the establishment of the Great Tenet. The conclusion is irrefragable—if the premises are sound. Most firmly do we believe that God is a righteous Judge;—most truly do we hold that retribution is His Law;—but we hold that it is a law of nature also; that the reward is involved in the virtue, and the punishment in the sin;—and that the arrangements of Providence would be very imperfect were it not so.

It is evident that the whole cogency of the above syllogism depends upon the correctness of the assumption that virtue and vice are not equitably recompensed in this life. It assumes, *first*, that we can read the heart and the circumstances, and see where virtue and vice—merit and demerit—really lie;—and, *secondly*, that we can look into the lot, and discern where there is, or is not, retribution;—that guilt and innocence are what we deem such, and that Nemesis executes no sentences but such as meet our eye. Alas! for the argument that rests on two postulates so notoriously false as these.

What do we know—what can we predicate—of the sinfulness of any fellow-creature? Can we say, "this man is more guilty than that?" or even, "this man is very wicked?" We may, indeed, be able to say, "this man has lied, has pilfered, has forged; and that man has gone through life with clean hands." But can we say that the first has not struggled long, though unsuccessfully, against temptations under which the second would have succumbed without an effort? We can say which has the cleanest hands before man;—can we say which has the cleanest soul before God? We may be able to say "this man has committed adultery, and that man has never been guilty of unchastity;"—but can we tell that the innocence of the one may not have been due to the coldness of his heart—to the absence of a motive—to the presence of a fear? And that the fall of the other may not

have been preceded by the most vehement self-contest—caused by the most over-mastering phrenzy—and atoned for by the most hallowing repentance? We know that one man is generous and open-handed, and another close, niggardly, and stern; but we do not know that the generosity of the one as well as the niggardliness of the other, may not be a mere yielding to native temperament. In the eye of Heaven, a long life of beneficence in the one may have cost less effort, and may indicate less virtue, than a few rare hidden acts of kindness wrung by duty out of the reluctant and unsympathizing nature of the other. There may be more real merit—more self-sacrificing effort—more of the noblest efforts of moral grandeur in a life of failure, sin, and shame, than in a career, to our eyes of stainless integrity. "God seeth not as man seeth." Let this be a consoling thought to the sinner who, black as he may be before the world, has yet contrived to keep some little light burning in his own soul;—a humbling and a warning thought to many who now walk proudly in the sunshine of immaculate fame.

But *do* we know even the outside life of men? Are we competent to pronounce even on their *deeds?* Do we know half the acts of wickedness or of virtue even of our most immediate fellows? Can we say with any certainty, even of our nearest friend, "this man has, or has not, committed such a sin—broken such a commandment"? Let each man ask his own heart. Of how many of our best and of our worst acts and qualities are our most intimate associates utterly unconscious? How many virtues does the world give us credit for that we do not possess? How small a portion of our evil deeds and thoughts ever come to light? Even of our few redeeming goodnesses, how large a portion is known to God only! Truly, we walk in a vain show [1]!

[1] "Or what if Heaven for once its searching light
Sent to some partial eye, disclosing all
The rude, bad thoughts, that in our bosom's night
Wander at large, nor heed Love's gentle thrall;

"Who would not shun the dreary uncouth place?
As if, fond leaning where her infant slept,
A mother's arm a serpent should embrace;
So might we friendless live, and die unwept.

"Then keep the softening veil in mercy drawn,
Thou who canst love us, though Thou read us true."
Keble's Christian Year.

When we see one whom we know only as a good man overtaken by a strange calamity, we call it a perplexing dispensation. But in the secret recesses of that man's heart, perhaps, how well does he feel to have deserved it, nay, often, how precisely can he trace back the open suffering to the secret sin! Sorrow and darkness come upon us; and the World pities us and says, "Poor man! he has little deserved such a fate." But *we* know that if the world knew us as we know ourselves, it would deem such fate far too light a chastisement for our iniquities. If it be so with ourselves, may it not be so with others? Men accustomed to self-study, and honest with themselves, often think their prosperity unmerited; rarely indeed do they think their calamities heavier than their demerits;—though they may be often at a loss—though it may often be impossible—to trace the connection between them.

We are wholly in the dark, then, as to what retribution is *deserved:*—we are equally in the dark as to what retribution is *awarded.* We could not tell, if it were left to us, where to reward and where to punish:—neither can we tell where reward and punishment now actually fall, nor in what proportion. The retribution may be in a man's heart or in his lot. In the one case we see it not at all—in the other we see it very imperfectly. But we may be certain that could we see even half the retribution that takes place in life, the argument we are considering would never have arisen. In the weary satiety of the idle—in the healthy energy of honest labour;—in the irritable temper of the selfish—in the serene peace of the benevolent;—in the startling tortures of the Soul where the passions have the mastery—in the calm Elysium which succeeds their subjugation;—may be traced materials of retribution sufficient to satisfy the severest justice. Deeds and states of mind are their own avengers. The consequence of an act is its reward or punishment. Our actions in the long run carry their own retribution along with them. If it were not so, the arrangements of nature would be at fault[1].

[1] "Men call the circumstance the retribution. The causal retribution is in the thing, and is seen by the Soul. The retribution in the circumstance is seen by the understanding; it is inseparable from the thing, but is often spread over a long time, and so does not become distinct for many years. The specific stripes may follow late after the offence, but they follow because they

"What did the preacher mean by assuming that judgment is not executed in this world; by saying that the wicked are successful, and the good are miserable, in the present life? Was it that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day—bank stock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended, for what else? Is it that they are to have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? why, they can do these now. The legitimate inference the disciple would draw, was, 'We are to have *such* a good time as the sinners have now;—or, to push it to its extreme import, 'You sin now; we shall sin by-and-by; we would sin now if we could;—not being successful, we expect our revenge to-morrow.'

"The fallacy lay in the immense concession that the bad are successful, that justice is not done now. The blindness of the preacher consisted in deferring to the base estimate of the market of what constitutes a manly success, instead of confronting and convicting the world from the truth; announcing the presence of the Soul; the omnipotence of the will, and so establishing the standard of good and ill, of success and falsehood, and summoning the dead to its present tribunal."[1]

Our false view of the whole subject arises from the hold still possessed over our minds by the old Jewish notion, that the good things of this life are the fitting and the promised recompense of virtue,—that virtue and prosperity, vice and poverty, are linked together by the decrees of divine justice. This unacknowledged fallacy lies at the root of much of our disappointment, and much of our surprise and perplexity at the dispensations of Providence. There is much sound wisdom on this subject in Mrs. Barbauld's Essay on "Inconsistency in our Expectations;"—still more perhaps in Pope's "Essay on Man."[2]

accompany it. Crime and punishment grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that, unsuspected, ripens within the flower of the pleasure that concealed it."—Emerson, Essay iii.

[1] Emerson's Essay on Compensation.

[2] "But is it not some reproach on the economy of Providence that such a one, who is a mean, dirty fellow, should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation? Not in the least. He made himself a mean, dirty fellow for

Much reliance is placed upon the assertion that Man possesses faculties which can find no fitting aliment, and can attain no adequate development, on earth; and which, therefore, are supposed to indicate the necessity of a future scene for their perfection. Many of our powers, we are told, do not ripen till the close of life; and reach their acme just as the approach of death renders them, if this life be all, of no further use to us. It is contradictory to all the analogies of nature, it is said, to imagine that Providence has bestowed any capacities or desires for which an appropriate scope and object have not been appointed. I confess I do not appreciate the force of this argument; it appears to me as if its setters forth had satisfied themselves too easily, as divines are apt to do, with mere words. It is not true that our powers—our active powers at least—whether physical or intellectual, reach their highest development as life draws to a close. On the contrary, they commonly attain their height in middle life, and gradually weaken and decay as age creeps over the frame. Wisdom, indeed, may be said in well-constituted minds to increase to the end of life; but wisdom is but the accumulated inference from our experience and our reflection, and will naturally augment with the perpetual increase of its materials. But memory, imagination, the power of acquisition, the power of intellectual creation, unquestionably do not continue to ripen and strengthen after maturity is passed. Nor is it easy to discover what those faculties are, for which this earth may not afford a fitting field and ample occupation. Love, Hope, Fancy, are probably the noblest endowments of man's moral Being. Cannot Love—even in its richest profusion and its tenderest refinements—find adequate exercise amid the varied relations of our mortal existence, in soothing sorrow, in conferring good, in brightening all the dark passages

that very end. He has paid his health, his conscience, his liberty for it; and will you envy him his bargain?"—Barbauld, i. 187.

> "But sometimes Virtue starves, while Vice is fed:
> What then? *Is the reward of Virtue bread?*
> That, Vice may merit; 'tis the price of toil;
> The knave deserves it when he tills the soil.
> The good man may be weak, be indolent;
> Nor is his claim to plenty, but content.
> What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The Soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy,
> Is Virtue's prize."
>
> Pope, Essay iv.

of life, and turning earth into an anticipated Paradise? Will any one who has once loved a fellow-creature with all the passionate energy of an earnest soul, or who has once melted into rapture with genuine gratitude to the God who has bestowed such happiness, dare to say that Love finds no ample development, and reaps no teeming harvest *here?* And Hope;—is not hope the spring of all exertion—the origin of all progress—the conferrer of all strength—along the toilsome and dusty pathways of the world? And can it find no worthy object in the dream of what Humanity, through the efforts which it stimulates and rewards, may yet become? And is Imagination entitled to complain of the narrow field in which it is permitted to expatiate, because Time and Space are the allotted limits of its range, so long as it has the mighty possibilities of human destiny before it, and Suns, and Systems, and Firmaments—countless, infinite, inscrutable—above it?

"But (it is said) the character, at least, continues growing till the end of life, and many of our best virtues are the fruit only of the discipline of Life, especially humility, forbearance, resignation, and contentment. Shall then existence terminate just when the human being is most fitted to appreciate it, to understand it, to fulfil its aims? Is its success to be the signal for its extinction? Is supreme excellence to be achieved only to be eclipsed for ever? Is our goal to be our grave?" I feel the weight of these considerations, and have nothing to urge against them.

But in truth all these arguments we have been considering are to be taken, not so much as proofs of the doctrine of a future life, as proofs of man's resolution to hold that doctrine. They are inadequate to demonstrate its soundness; but amply sufficient to show that *the belief being in man's mind*, he knows not how nor whence, he is determined to maintain it, curious to account for it, anxious to justify it. Erroneously conceiving that it must be a product of reason, he diligently looks about to discover the logical processes which have generated it; and clings to the shallowest crudities rather than surrender (as he conceives) the title-deeds of his faith.

The truth we believe to be, that a future existence is, and must be, a matter of *information*, not of *inference*. The intellect could never have discovered it, and can never prove it —the Soul must have revealed it; must, and does, perpetually reveal it. It is a matter which comes properly within the

cognizance of the Soul[1]—of that spiritual sense, to which on such topics we must look for information, as we look to our bodily senses for information touching the things of earth—things that lie within their province. We never dream of doubting what *they* tell us of the external world, though a Berkeley should show us that their teaching is at variance with, or indefensible by logic. We therefore at once cut the Gordian knot by conceding to the Soul the privilege of instructing us as to the things of itself;—we apply to the spiritual sense for information on spiritual things. We believe that there is no other solution of the question. To the man who disbelieves the Soul's existence, this will of course appear an unwarrantable and illogical admission. To him the Soul has not spoken. My sources of information are unavailable to him. *My* soul can tell *him* nothing. Providence has denied to him a *sense* which has been granted to me; and all the knowledge which comes to me through the avenues of that sense must seem foolishness to him.

The only occasions on which a shade of doubt has passed over my conviction of a future existence, have been when I have rashly endeavoured to make out a case, to give a reason for the faith that is in me, to assign ostensible and logical grounds for my belief. At such times, and still more when I have heard others attempting to prove the existence of a future world by arguments which could satisfy no one by whom arguments were needed, I confess that a chill dismay has often struck into my heart, and a fluctuating darkness has lowered down upon my creed, to be dissipated only when I had again left inference and induction far behind, and once more suffered the Soul to take counsel with itself.

This appears to me the only foundation on which the belief

[1] "That a purely *historical* is as unsatisfactory as a metaphysical basis for a spiritual doctrine is obvious; indeed Paul gives us clearly to understand that the future hopes of the soul were to be discerned by the soul itself, for itself; and did not depend upon man's wisdom, as a question of history does and must. . . . . Paul may have had more of direct insight into this deepest of subjects than the passages quoted denote: God forbid that I should presumptuously limit the insight enjoyed by his most favoured servants. Yet his light does us little or no good, while it is a light outside of us; so long we are depending on the soundness of Paul's faculties. If he in any way confused the conclusions of his logic (which is often extremely inconsequent and mistaken) with the perceptions of his divinely-illuminated soul, our belief might prove baseless. Faith by proxy is really no faith at all, and certainly is not what Paul would have ever recommended."—Newman on the Soul, pp. 187–9.

in a future life can legitimately rest, to those who do not accept a miraculous external revelation. *Et tibi magna satis.* It is a belief anterior to reasoning, independent of reasoning, unproveable by reasoning; and yet *as no logic can demonstrate its unsoundness*, or can bring more than negative evidence to oppose to it—I can hold it with a simplicity, a tenacity, an undoubting faith, which is never granted to the conclusions of the understanding. *Là, où finit le raisonnement, commence la veritable certitude.*" It is a kind provision in man's moral nature that he is not made dependent on the tardy, imperfect, fallible, and halting processes of logic, for any convictions necessary either to happiness or action.[1] These are all instinctive, primary, intuitive. Reason examines them, combines them, confirms them, questions them; but there they remain, heedless alike of her patronage or her hostility;—" asking no leave to shine of our terrestrial star."

It is an immense advantage gained, when we have discovered and decided that it is not from the logical faculty that our knowledge on spiritual topics is to be gained. We can then afford to be honest—to give reason and analysis fair play—to shrink from no conclusion, however unwelcome to our speculations, which they may force upon us;—for after they have done all they can to correct, to negative, to ascertain, we feel that their function is critical merely—*that our light comes to us from elsewhere.*

[1] "There are instances of common convictions—firm ones too—which you cannot put to proof in a logical form. There is our reliance on *permanency of the laws of Nature.* One of the ablest reasoners, and with no bias towards Christianity, or any particular form of religion in his mind, has found himself unable to account for this reliance but by terming it a human instinct, something analogous to the instincts of animals. That the Sun rose to-day is no logical proof that he will rise to-morrow. That the grain grew last year does not argue, by a syllogistic deduction, that it will grow next year. Yet where is there a confidence stronger than this?—where a belief more firm? Our conviction of *the reality of external nature* is another instance of the same description. That, too, baffles the logician. You cannot show that there is matter, or existence at all, beyond yourself; and yet you believe it, rely upon it, act upon it. It may all be only impression on our consciousness. The Berkeleian can dispose of the whole material universe in this way with the greatest ease. There may be no stars shining in Heaven, no trees growing in the forest—all may be but sensation, thought, in us; still, who does not rest upon, who does not act upon, the reality of something which is out of us, with an assurance as strong as that of our belief in our own existence? Those who require direct agencies of demonstration in such matters as these—who contend that belief and the logical form of proof have an inseparable union—must find their way out of this dilemma as well as they can."—Fox, On the Religious Ideas, p. 20.

There are three points especially of religious belief, regarding which intuition (or instinct) and logic are at variance;—the efficacy of prayer;—man's free-will;—and a future existence. If believed, they must be believed, the last without the countenance, the two former in spite of the hostility, of logic. Hence the belief in them is most resolute, and undoubting the nearer men and nations approach to the *instinctive condition*.[1] Savages never doubt them; sufferers never doubt them; men in the excitement of vehement action never doubt them. It is the quiet, even tenour of comfortable and refined existence—it is the fireside, the library, the arm-chair, that doubt, that question, that speak of darkness, that ask for proofs.

We have already intimated that we think it questionable whether the doctrine of a future life has been of that practical service to mankind, either in kind or degree, which is commonly assumed. Of its inestimable value, as a consolation to the sorrowing, as a hope to the aspiring, as a rest to the weary and heavy-laden, it is not easy to speak in language strong enough for the occasion. But we incline to doubt whether it exercises much influence on the actual morals of mankind at large—whether, except in isolated instances, the expectation of future retribution operates strongly to deter from crime or to stimulate to virtue[2]. And, as we said in

[1] This is the idea that lies at the root of Wordsworth's sublimest poem—The Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.

"Heaven lies about us in our Infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth who daily further from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."
* * * * *
"Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thine immortality
Broods like the day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child!"

"Such remarks, I fear, may be felt as exceedingly painful by those who are accustomed to regard a fixed logical dogma on this subject to be of first-rate importance, and even of necessity; but a little reflection as to the high

the last section, it is more than doubtful whether the happiness and social progress of mankind has not rather been retarded than promoted by the doctrine.

But as to the deep paramount interest of the doctrine to every believer, there can be no difference of opinion. Speculation as to the nature of that strange and new existence, and as to the influence which our proceedings *here* may exert upon our position *there*, cannot fail to engross much of the thoughts of the serious mind. On this latter point the philosophical Theist and the mere Biblical Christian differ less than either is willing to assume. Both believe that actually, and by *some* operation, the condition of the Soul on earth must determine at least the outset of its future destiny. The Christian conceives that, by an arbitrary decree of the Most High, the virtuous Soul will be assigned to happiness, and the vicious Soul to misery. The Theist conceives that this precise allotment will result from the very nature of the Soul itself. The Christian believes that, as each soul appears before its Maker, it will receive from His lips the dread sentence which will fix it for ever on one side or other of that great gulph which separates the space where He *is* from the space where He is *not*. The Theist believes that the quickened perceptions, the intensified faculties, the unclouded vision, which we imagine as proper to the disembodied spirit, will constitute its sure Heaven or its inevitable Hell. The one creed is, that the pure, the loving, the aspiring Soul, *must* be happy; and that the grovelling, the tarnished, the malignant Soul, *cannot* be so. The other creed is, that God will pronounce to them this irreversible fiat at the last great day.

We cannot agree with those who say that Earth can give us no conception, no foretaste, of the felicities of Heaven. How then can we affect honestly to desire it? If we could not conceive of it, how could we long for it? And how can we conceive of it, but from the basis of experienced feelings? "What can we reason but from what we know?" Why should we regard this life as so wretched and unworthy that

tone of spiritual elevation maintained by the Hebrew bards ought to suffice to shew that that 'necessity' is extremely exaggerated. But this is not all. Need we ask what sort of influence the current views exert over the irreligious? Are they less profane for the dreadful doctrine of an eternal Hell? . . . . That a firm belief of immortality, *arising out of insight*, must have very energetic force, I regard as an axiom; but as *an external* dogma, I cannot but think that its efficacy is prodigiously over-rated."—Newman on the Soul.

the happiness of Heaven must necessarily be composed of distinct ingredients from the happiness of Earth? God made it too.

That something will yet remain to be superadded—something entirely new—in that future existence, I can well believe. Though God will be—can be—no nearer to us there than here—yet as our perceptions of his presence will be clearer, and our insight into his nature incalculably deeper, it may be that at length,—when in the course of those endless gradations of progress through which our spiritual faculties will attain their full development, we shall have begun to know Him with something of the same cognizance with which we know our fellow-creatures here—we shall learn so to love Him, that that love will absorb into itself all the other constituents of the Beatific Life. But I can conceive of this only as the result of the most ultimate and Seraphic knowledge:—to expect it soon—or to affect it here—seems to me equally irrational and insincere.

It is unreasonable to expect so entire a change in the character of the Soul, by the mere event of death, as would entitle it, or enable it to enter at once on the enjoyment of supreme felicity. With the shuffling off this mortal coil, we may indeed hope to lay down at once and for ever all those temptations with which in this life the senses beset the soul, all that physical weakness which has clogged and bounded the exertions of the intellect, all that obscurity with which our material nature has too often clouded our moral vision. But that the Spirit which has been angry, narrow, or infirm *here*, should suddenly become large, strong, and placid *there*, is a miracle which the analogies of God's workings give us no ground to anticipate. We believe that according to the goal which each soul has reached on earth, will be its starting-point in Heaven—that, through long ages of self-elaborating effort, it must win its way up nearer and nearer to the Throne of God—and that occupation can never fail, nor interest ever flag, even through everlasting being;—for, infinite as may be its duration, will it not be surpassed by the infinitude of the created universe? When we reflect that during a life of seventy years, the wisest of the sons of men, though aided by all the knowledge that preceding generations have bequeathed to them, can penetrate only an insignificant portion of the wonders of this little earth, we need not fear that Eter-

nity will exhaust the contemplations of him to whom will lie open, not only the systems and firmaments we read of and can dimly see, but that larger, remoter, more illimitable universe which we cannot even dream of here.

"But the punishments of the next World?" we hear it asked. Well! is our imagination so poor and barren that we can conceive of no adequate and ample ones, without having recourse to the figures of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched? Must not a future world in itself—the condition of "spiritual corporeity" alone—bring with it dreadful retribution to the wicked, the selfish, and the weak? In the mere fact of their *cleared perceptions*—in the realization of their low position—in seeing themselves at length as they really are—in feeling that all their work *is yet to do*—in beholding all those they loved and venerated far before them—away from them—fading in the bright distance,—may lie, must lie, a torture, a purifying fire, in comparison with which the representations of Dante and Milton shrivel into tameness and inadequacy. To the base, the sensual, the hard, who have no notion of a mental torment, translate these, if you will, by the image of a quenchless flame and a sulphurous lake; but seek not to embody such coarse and earthly conceptions in the theology of better natures.

THE END.

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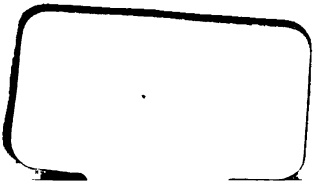
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